

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Staff Progression: A Leadership Succession Crisis in Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges

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ABSTRACT

Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges in the Learning and Skills Sector have made considerable strides in working with learners from diverse backgrounds, have a good track record of tackling inequality for learners and an inspection framework that places an emphasis on improving equality and diversity. However, the experience of some staff is starkly different. In October 2002, the sector published the Commission for Black Staff report, *Further Education Leading the Way*, which identified institutional racism as a factor negatively impacting on the career progression of Black and Minority Ethnic staff. Seven years on from this report and despite initiatives addressing many of the recommendations, there has been little success in terms of increasing the number of BME staff in senior positions. This is undermining the reputation of the sector and has the potential to affect how a 'leadership succession crisis' is being tackled.

Amidst the backdrop of a major global recession and increasing fears of a reversal of the minimal progress that has been made, this thesis revisits the experiences of BME staff seven years on from the report. Through a documentary analysis of sector policies and strategies and the conducting of interviews and focus groups, it reviews how the sector responded then, examines the position of BME professionals now and evaluates the impact of strategies implemented following the recommendations given in 2002. Findings suggest that the most significant barriers are the institutional and micropolitical behaviours that reflect a lack of understanding, awareness and value of the contributions that BME professionals bring to our institutions. The results highlight the importance of the need for a wider discourse about theories of race and the racial discriminatory factors that impact on leadership and management issues in the Learning and Skills Sector and which continue to act as barriers to BME staff progression. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is offered as a framework for this dialogue and further research on the concept of a BME leadership style is suggested.

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I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Helen A Deane

Signed: 

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And to Dad, who I know, knows I made it!

CONTENTS PAGE

List of Figures	6
List of Appendices	7
Glossary	8
Supporting Statement	9
Chapter 1 - Introduction	16
1.1 Background	16
1.2 Thesis Structure	17
1.3 Rationale and Background	18
1.4 Professional Context	22
1.5 Research Context, Research Questions and Sources of Data	24
1.6 Ethical Issues	25
Chapter 2 - Key Concepts and Definitions	27
2.1 Defining the term 'Black'	27
2.2 Defining 'Race'	30
2.3 What is Racism?	31
2.4 Positive Action, Positive Discrimination and Affirmative Action	37
2.5 A Review of Definitions	39
2.6 Critical Race Theory	41
Chapter 3 - BME Leadership in FE: Key Themes and Trends	51
3.1 Introduction	51
3.2 The Literature Search	52
3.3 Succession Planning and the FE Sector Succession Crisis	52
3.4 FE Workforce Diversity Profile	54
3.5 BME Staff Recruitment and Selection	55
3.6 Positive Action Initiatives in the FE Sector	57
3.7 A Review of Other Public Sector Initiatives	60
3.8 BME Staff Identity	63
3.9 A BME Leadership and Management Style	66
3.10 Attrition Rates, Retention and Future Employment	68
3.11 Intersectionality	69
3.12 Summary and Conclusion	73
Chapter 4 – Methodology	74
4.1 Introduction	74
4.2 Purpose of the Research	74
4.3 Research Framework	75
4.4 Research Approach	76
4.5 Research Methods	77
4.6 Secondary Research	77
4.7 Primary Research	79
4.8 Research Tools	87
4.9 Validity and Reliability	87
4.10 Ethical Issues	89
4.11 Analysis of the Data	94
4.12 Profile of Research Population	97
4.13 Respondent and Participant Profile	99
4.14 Summary	102

Chapter 5 - Research Findings – Summary of the Themes	104
5.1 Introduction	104
5.2 Definitions, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Colour-Blindness	105
5.3 Succession Planning, the FE Succession Crisis and Diversification	111
5.4 BME Staff Recruitment and Selection	115
5.5 BME Leadership, Training and Development and Positive Action	115
5.6 Other Public Sector Initiatives – Barriers to Progression	124
5.7 BME Staff Identity	126
5.8 A BME Leadership and Management Style	126
5.9 Attrition Rates, Retention and Future Employment Patterns	129
5.10 Intersectionality and Barriers to BME Staff Progression	132
5.11 Other Themes	134
5.12 Breaking Down Barriers	135
5.13 Summary of Findings	138
Chapter 6 - Conclusion	139
6.1 Introduction	139
6.2 Leadership and Race Theory - Acknowledging the BME leadership style	140
6.3 Returning to the Research Questions	142
6.4 Recommendations	146
6.5 Future Research	149
6.6 Issues for my Research and Professional Practice	151
6.7 Dissemination of the Findings	152
6.8 And Finally.....	154
References	157
Appendices	169

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1	Research questions, methods and sources of data	25
Figure 2	A Framework for Researching Leadership Development and Race	48
Figure 3	Figure 3: Summary of participant profiles: one-to-one interviews	86
Figure 4	Ethical issues and action taken to limit researcher bias	93
Figure 5	Data analysis methods adopted	95
Figure 6	First level coding framework	96
Figure 7	Levels and roles of LSS staff	96
Figure 8	Percentage of managers (Tier 3 and above) by ethnicity and UK region (adapted from LLUK, 2007, SIR data)	98
Figure 9	Questionnaire response from secondary data	99
Figure 10	BME Questionnaire Responses from Secondary Data	99
Figure 11	Respondents by type of provider – primary focus group	100
Figure 12	Focus groups by participant numbers and regions	101
Figure 13	Case Study A: Mina's story – Micro-politics	106
Figure 14	Case Study B: Mohammed's Story - Training and Development	121
Figure 15	Advantage and disadvantages of being in an all BME group	122
Figure 16	Case Study C: Hazels' story - Attrition	131
Figure 17	College Case Study (College Alpha) – Breaking down barriers	137

LIST OF APPENDICES

		Page
Appendix 1	Co-authors permission	171
Appendix 2	Permission from 2008 project funders (Learning & Skills Improvement Service)	172
Appendix 3	Focus group invitation (email/letter)	173
Appendix 4	Interview Profile	174
Appendix 5	Focus groups and interview response template	175
Appendix 6	Interview and focus groups questions	177
Appendix 7	Focus group and interview discussion guide	179
Appendix 8	Sample interview response - themed	180
Appendix 9	Ethnic profiling (full and general classification)	182
Appendix 10	Interviewee and participant profiles by region, age and gender	183

GLOSSARY

FE	Further Education
ACL	Adult and Community Learning
AUT	Association of Universities Teachers
BLI	Black Leadership Initiative
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CBSFE	Commission for Black Staff report, <i>Further Education Leading the Way</i>
CEL	Centre for Excellence in Leadership (now LSIS)
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DBIS	Department of Business Innovation and Skills (formerly DIUS)
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families (formerly DfES)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (then DIUS, now DBIS)
DIUS	Department of Innovation Universities and Skills (now DBIS)
DOH	Department of Health
EMA	Ethnic Minority Achievement
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation (now LLUK)
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HOD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
I&DeA	Improvement and Development Agency
LA	Local Authority
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgendered
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency (now LSN)
LSIS	Learning and Skills Improvement Agency (formerly CEL & QIA)
LSN	Learning and Skills Network
LSS	Learning and Skills Sector
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NAHT	National Association for Headteachers
NBP	Network for Black Professionals
NBPA	National Black Police Association
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NHS	National Health Service
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PQP	Principal's Qualifying Programme
QIA	Quality Improvement Agency (now LSIS)
REES	Race Equality in Employment Standard
REIA	Race Equality Impact Assessment
RRA	Race Relations Act
RRAA	Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000)
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
SIR	Staff Individualised Records
THE	Times Higher Education
THES	Times Higher Education Supplement
WBL	Work Based Learning
YPLA	Young People's Learning Agency

SUMMARY OF MY LEARNING EXPERIENCE WHILST ON THE EdD PROGRAMME

Ten years after walking into the Institute of Education and enrolling on the Doctor of Education programme, I am pleased to present this statement. As laid down by the requirements of the programme, this summary will provide a synthesis of my learning experience. It will make links between the elements covered as part of the taught units of study and the independent studies and it will demonstrate how the programme has contributed to my professional development and knowledge. I will also, where applicable, indicate any international, intercultural and comparative dimensions of my thesis.

I began this programme in the year 2000 when I was in the position of a first line manager in a large South London College. I had a number of reasons for embarking on this course and planned at the time to complete it in a maximum of four years. I had always been interested in how and why education policies and strategies were decided and was concerned that as a practitioner, we, at the grass roots, were not adequately consulted or informed about the formation of policies that would inevitably be left with us to deliver. My view was that policies were 'done' to us rather than with us and I wanted to be qualified and experienced enough to be able to inform policy making from the research and investigation stage.

I also wanted to become part of a research community, which was not representative of the diverse population that it served. I considered that if the majority of researchers continued to be made up of one particular group, it was likely that, given the nature of interpretation and analyses, policies may not always reflect the experience of those who were being researched, but rather the experience of the researcher.

The third reason I decided to start this programme of study was to try and achieve a personal ambition of reaching my full potential academically. I always knew that completing a doctorate would be a challenge, but never

had a doubt that I had the ability to do so. This, I think, is based on the fact that for many years I was made to believe that I would not achieve educationally and this experience has laid the foundation for the values that I place on the way I approach my research. As a late academic developer, completing a doctorate successfully is something that is a great achievement for me.

Embarking on the EdD programme was the perfect option for me. I could continue to be a practitioner as well as have the opportunity to become involved in research, fulfil one of my ambitions of writing for an audience and all while I was still able to work full-time and pay the bills!

My research interest from the outset has been consistent and this has been echoed in all the written work produced for this course. I am interested in the social, ethical and political role of the Learning and Skills Sector (LSS) institutions and how these and sector stakeholders can develop greater levels of understanding of social inclusion and diversity. One of my research concerns when I began the programme was the lack of BME representation at leadership levels in Further Education (FE) colleges. I observed that many college policies did not reflect the needs of the wider FE learning community which was increasingly becoming more ethnically diverse. I found the first taught programme a great opportunity to develop the process of conceptualising this issue and focused my assignment on examining the position of BME professionals in the sector.

I had in particular been influenced by a session delivered by Louise Morley which was presented in the context of a feminist discourse and the study of micro-politics. This session immediately resonated with my own position and values and it is a theme that has continued to have an impact on my professional and academic development and practice.

Two years after joining the programme, I encountered a considerable amount of domestic and personal upheaval and also experienced a demanding and challenging promotion. This resulted in my having to interrupt my studies

during the Autumn and Spring term of 2002/03 and again in the Autumn term of 2003/04. This obviously made my plan of completing the programme within 4 years unrealistic.

My annual review of 2003 identified the developments that had taken place up to this time and despite my issues, I was able to reflect on my progress and future development needs and identified clearly where I wanted to take my studies. In terms of the link between my professional practice and my academic interest, events had started to overtake me and by 2003, a number of national studies and reports had been published which were based on research undertaken in precisely the same area that I had planned to undertake my studies. This resulted in a dilemma for me in terms of the direction I wanted to take for my subject of study and I consider that this may have had an effect on my delayed completion.

I changed my professional direction when in March 2004 I was seconded to the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) now Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the sector skills council for FE. I continued this secondment at the Department of Education and Skills (DfES), now the Department for Education (DfE). This move enabled me to become involved in working on strategy and policy making at a governmental level and I was able to use my experience of studying at doctorate level to support my professional development in what was a completely new career path for me.

In my 2004 review and having completed the 2nd taught programme assignment, I was able to recognise the importance of trying to take advantage of the strong research networks available at the Institute. Completing the assignment supported my understanding of my research interest as well as strengthened my research, analysis and study skills. Following support from my tutor and working on study tips and strategies, I also recognised an improvement in my writing and proof-reading skills.

My intention was to return to my substantive role at college in July 2005. Unfortunately, things did not work out as I had planned and I was informed in

May 2005 that my post had been made redundant and that I would not be returning to my job. Fortunately, the role I had held at the Standards Unit was still available and I was able to continue for a short while as an independent consultant. This was a major blow for me and I had a difficult time adjusting to this new status.

At my annual review meeting in June 2005, I had just been informed of this development and recognised that this would affect my motivation and confidence which I discussed with my supervisor. I changed my programme completion date to December 2006 and having reached the stage of nearly completing my Institutional Focused Study (IFS), I took the opportunity to think about my future.

At that point I had recognised a number of issues in terms of what impact my professional and personal situation was having on my academic progress and reflected on these issues with my supervisor. I observed that working at FENTO and the Standards Unit had given me the opportunity to put my research and academic learning into practice. Both these roles involved me being a project manager which supported my development in the management of research projects. I also worked with a number of research consultants and was able to learn about different reporting and study methods and styles. I attended focus groups and interviews and had the opportunity to conduct policy document reviews and be involved directly in a range of research and writing activities.

In terms of areas for my academic development, I was disappointed with my progress on the programme at this time. I had regularly missed my deadlines for completion and submitting work and despite the fact that my circumstances were challenging, I continued to give myself what I now recognise were unrealistic targets. Of course my need to try and complete the programme sooner rather than later, was also due to the fact that the longer I was taking to complete, the more it was costing me financially and this was also very frustrating.

My main learning at this time is undoubtedly my understanding of the relevance of the over-used acronym SMART. This is something that I now always reflect on when setting personal goals. I have learnt over the period of completing this programme the importance of making all my personal and professional targets more specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

The other learning and development issue that particularly stood out for me in 2005, and which has continued to do so, was my lack of engagement with the research community. I recognised that being part of this community was a crucial part in my academic development and one which I had not really taken the opportunity to take full advantage of. This is one of the drawbacks of completing a doctorate on a part-time basis. It can be very difficult to immerse oneself in the world of academia whilst holding down a full-time job, but it is something that I would have liked to have been more engaged with. I did not attend enough seminars and workshops and completed much of my independent studies in isolation.

On the occasions where I have been able to find the time to come to university, I relished the atmosphere and the surroundings and particularly enjoyed spending time in the library and holding discussions with other research students. A number of times I found myself being the last person to leave the library.

I was fairly pleased with the outcome of my IFS, which was effectively a pilot research project around the same subject of my thesis. I faced a number of issues which I believe was due to the subject matter I had chosen, and which had a marked effect on the direction of my career. Insider researcher issues as well difficulties concerning the sensitivity involved with examining aspects of leadership, 'race' and diversity had an effect on how I was viewed by colleagues along the way, and not always in a positive way. I did however overcome these barriers and managed to produce a paper, that I believe merited a higher grade!

Working as an independent consultant should in theory have given me the flexibility to progress further with the thesis stage of my studies, which I officially started in 2006. As indicated earlier, due to my original research topic being superseded by the publication of national reports and surveys examining the same research questions, I decided to change my focus and chose a subject linked to my role at the Standards Unit. Unfortunately, due to 'insider research' issues including conflict of interests, ethical issues and other logistical problems with the collection of data, I had to rethink the subject of my research proposal. I spent a good few months considering whether to change the topic of my research to avoid these problems and eventually decided to return to my original theme and approach it from a different angle. This return to the issue in which I have the most professional, academic and personal interest rejuvenated me and re-energised my determination to finish and succeed.

Since 2006, I have worked largely independently towards the completion of my thesis. Again, I have not attended enough seminars and workshops which I know would have really supported my progress and motivation. What I have found with my personal life, however, is that I have tried to compensate for this by developing more friendships and associations with people who share my interest in reflection, research and writing. This has helped with the development of what I call my academic conversations.

My expected date for completion during these years had continually been pushed back and in 2006 my review I noted my disappointment at not being able to progress with my studies, despite being at the stage where I was actually starting to really enjoy being a 'research student'.

In 2007, I suffered a sudden close family bereavement in what was a very difficult circumstance and this event put a hold on my studies completely. At this time I came very close to withdrawing from the programme and really only got my motivation back in the summer of 2009. Since then I have worked hard on finding the head space and time to focus on the completion of my thesis. Again I have worked very independently, but have managed to

continue having my 'academic conversations' which have helped me immensely.

During the last four years, in my role as an education consultant, I have acquired research commissions and completed some major studies that have had an impact on national LSS strategy and policy around equality and diversity. The only criticism I have received was when a colleague read a draft of a literature review I had completed and kindly pointed out that it was like '*reading an essay*'. I shared this with my supervisor who in turn highlighted that my writing at that time was more suited to the completion of policy research studies. With her support I have since developed the art of how to distinguish writing academically from writing reports for policy makers. I have found the structure of the EdD programme a very supportive one, both on a formal basis and in terms of the informal support and motivation given to me by the EdD team.

Seeing the pride in my family and the subliminal effect doing this program has had on the academic motivation and aspirations on the youngsters in the family has been invaluable. I have developed my confidence to write for publications and have discovered how much I enjoy academia and learning. I aim to one day be in a position to spend more time involved in research and writing activities.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

This research reports on the findings from a study undertaken between October 2008 and June 2009 which looked at the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) professionals who work in colleges and learning providers in Further Education (FE) and Sixth Form colleges in the UK, a staff group who are under-represented in leadership roles and positions. FE and Sixth Form colleges form part of the wider learning & skills sector (LSS)¹ which was established in 2001 following the most radical and major development in the post-compulsory education system in England since the incorporation of Further Education (FE) colleges in 1993.

Throughout and for the purposes of this thesis only, the generic term FE is referred to when describing the FE and sixth form college sector and the national partners responsible for their planning, funding² and quality improvement³.

FE is recognised as one of the key sectors in securing wider Government ambitions of economic, employment and social success and cohesion through its development of the skills and talents of young people and adults.

¹ The wider learning and skills sector (LSS) includes further education colleges; sixth form colleges; special designated institutions; providers of work-based learning; employers delivering Learning and Skills Council funded provision; local authorities (former external institutions, adult and community learning provision and, where relevant, work-based learning); Jobcentre Plus providers; centres of higher education offering further education; school sixth forms; independent former external institutions; Ufi/learn direct hubs; and specialist colleges for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

² Until April 2010, the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) was the non-departmental public body responsible for LSS provider planning and funding. The LSC has now been replaced with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA): the Agency who is responsible for post – 19 operations, funding and development working closely with the Department of Business Innovation & Skills (DBIS) and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA): the agency providing budgetary supervision and strategic support for Local Authority 16 – 19 provision.

³ The range of LSS bodies responsible for improving the quality of provision such as the Learning & Skills Improvement Agency (LSIS) and other sector agencies

The Department of Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) in the 2008 document entitled '*FE Colleges – Models for Success*', states that the system is central to;

“..... building a society where no-one is left behind, and where everyone is given a greater stake in the community in the form of higher wages, higher aspirations and more stable and secure lives. Further education (FE) is critical to our long-term ambitions for economic and social success” (p3)

The primary aim of this research is to find evidence that identifies why the under-representation of BME leaders in FE still exists, despite initiatives to address this concern. The drive behind my undertaking this study is based on my belief that it is important that the FE sector maintains a dialogue and continually explores the reasons for this incomprehensible inequality. Until this lack of ethnic representation of its senior leaders is tackled and a better ethnic balance is achieved, this discourse must be continued. Representation is not only in terms of the leadership of FE and sixth form colleges, but also in terms of senior LSS leaders generally. Practically, there are business, legal, educational and ethical imperatives for challenging this inequality and although this research focuses on the BME groups, other aspects of staff progression and diversity are just as important and where relevant and appropriate, references are included which cover other equality strands, for example the issue of senior leadership, gender and disability which also needs to be addressed in the FE sector.

1.2 Thesis Structure

The thesis is presented in six chapters beginning with this introduction which lays out the basis for the research and looks at the professional and personal context in which I examine the issues. This section of the introduction establishes the parameters and search criteria for the literature review and is followed by an examination of the rationale for conducting a study of this nature.

The introductory chapter goes on to introduce a new paradigm for the discussion around BME staff progression in FE and justifies the need to continue a dialogue around this issue. An examination of my professional and personal context is followed by an introduction of the key research questions and the ethical issues and approaches which are analysed later in the thesis. The second chapter focuses on defining and analysing the key concepts and definitions being explored in the thesis. The terms Black Minority Ethnic (BME), 'race', racism, institutional racism, critical 'race' theory, micro-politics, positive discrimination and positive action are all discussed and defined. The third chapter presents the literature review which begins by highlighting the fact that the areas covered are neither new, nor un-researched. The review presents a documentary analysis of recent LSS sector policies and strategies, some other public sector policies and initiatives about BME staff progression and leadership issues and reports on relevant workforce development issues. It draws on published government and stakeholder policy and strategy reports, education leadership and management texts and studies as well as leadership journals and other relevant literature. The fourth chapter discusses the research methodology and includes a section on ethical issues and the methods of data collection, analysis, and dissemination, with the fifth chapter presenting the findings and summary of the themes. The primary data for the research were collected in November 2008 and May 2009 and chapter four contains a detailed presentation and analysis of these data. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the findings, a set of recommendations to address some of these findings and suggests areas for further research.

1.3 Rationale and Background

1.3.1 The need for change

By conducting this research and keeping BME representation in FE on the agenda I am acknowledging the need to continually look for different ways in which to address this issue. In order to support and hasten a much needed change, we need to periodically examine FE institutional and sector practices that have a positive or negative impact on the progression of this particular group of professionals.

1.3.2 The leadership crisis

Recent research such as that published in 2008 by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL), now the Learning and Skills Improvement Agency (LSIS), has shown that FE is still facing a leadership succession crisis as initially identified in a 2002 Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) report commissioned by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The 2002 study found that 60 per cent of college and work based learning (WBL) leaders were due to retire by 2007 and this was especially pronounced in the case of BME staff. FE is not the only sector facing a leadership crisis and the demographic statistics are well known. A 2007 report by the Hay group found that a third of public sector organisations had formal processes to identify future leaders, four per cent had programmes to accelerate their potential but only two per cent managed their career development. The report recognised the impact of the demographic statistics stating that;

“Across the developed world (in all sectors) positions of senior leadership are largely held by the ‘baby boom’ generation. And this generation is approaching retirement. In fact, 34% of senior leaders could retire today. The next generation, who should be stepping up into their roles, is smaller.” (Hay Group, 2007, p2).

With FE employing an increasing number of experienced professionals from a BME background, there is a need to ensure that the views and voices of this untapped pool of talent are heard and documented.

1.3.3 The Commission for Black Staff in FE (CBSFE) - seven years on

The Commission for Black Staff in FE (CBSFE) was an independent body set up after the MacPherson Report (1999), which was published following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. In his report Sir William MacPherson highlighted the mishandling of the investigation into Stephen's racially motivated murder, stating that it was “*marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers.*” (para 46.1) These actions resulted in his murderers going unpunished.

The Commission report, *Challenging Racism: Further Education Leading the Way* was published in October 2002 and gave compelling evidence which confirmed the reality of institutional racism in our FE colleges and other LSS providers and stakeholders. The commission gathered first-hand evidence from BME and white staff and commissioned the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from providers, national organisations, stakeholders and witnesses as well as held targeted events at which BME staff expressed their views. From this information they were able to establish how institutional racism had affected BME staff, a summary of which is included in the literature review. The rationale for revisiting the findings and recommendations from this report seven years on is to establish its impact by assessing progress of the recommendations which were implemented and by examining the effect on BME staff and leadership progression.

1.3.4 Succession Planning and Diversity

Few organisations place enough importance on or even recognise the need to prioritise the issue of their succession management and planning. This is not unique to FE. Furthermore, although practitioners and academics alike are increasingly acknowledging the need for planning practices that facilitate better talent identification, there has been little attention to the incorporation of gender and racial diversity within succession planning. An emerging body of empirical evidence (e.g., Richard, 2000; Wright, Ferris, Hiller, & Kroll, 1995) which indicates that there are positive performance impacts when diversity is taken on board is examined in the literature review. A range of books and academic journal articles discuss the issue of recognising diversity in succession planning from an international as well as a FE sector perspective and there is increasing importance being placed on this issue by other public sector organisations and leading private companies. Recent survey data and research reports (Esen, 2008, Murphy, 2009, CIPD, 2010a) demonstrate the importance of diversity practices in succession and talent management planning for increased organisational competitiveness and are discussed in the review.

1.3.5 A new leadership and management discourse and paradigm around BME staff progression in the FE Sector

The most relevant and recent FE policy documents are surveyed for the literature review which aims to establish an academic discourse around the subject matter. The CBSFE (2002) identified the institutional barriers to BME progression and it is this document that will be used as a point of reference and benchmark for assessing current initiatives and the FE sector position now. There is a strong political motive in establishing a new paradigm for the discussion, given that so much has been invested by the sector to address the lack of BME staff advancement.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the 1970's as a form of legal scholarship which considers judicial conclusions to be based on inherently racist social assumptions. In looking to establish a new construct and establish a fresh body of FE knowledge around this research, CRT offers a development and a framework that can illuminate areas of concern about the inequality of leadership and management progression in FE. Other informal aspects of organisational practices and cultures which have impacted on BME staff recognition are also examined.

1.3.6 The challenge of identifying, analysing the evidence and articulating the issue

Much of the data, discussions and interviews analysed demonstrate the difficulty in ascertaining what the precise reasons are for the slow progress in increasing the numbers of BME staff acquiring senior and top leadership roles in the sector. The number of BME staff in senior positions is relatively easy to assess. However, qualitative evidence, such as case histories, narratives and individual experience and stories of BME staff and other witness statements, is more difficult to measure, particularly in terms of finding concrete reasons for the small numbers progressing into senior leadership roles. This research articulates some of these issues.

1.4 Professional Context

My current professional, academic concern and research interest is in the social, ethical and political role of post-16 educational institutions. I have a particular interest in how these institutions and sector stakeholders can develop greater levels of understanding of social inclusion and the progression of individuals who have had difficulty in accessing good quality education. By promoting and undertaking this area of research I believe that this can support the raising of diversity and inclusion issues for a wider group of individuals. These include those who have been marginalised because of their social background, sexuality, ethnicity and gender, religion or beliefs and have been prevented from reaching their full social and economic potential because of these perceived 'differences'. This research will explore and inform the current debate about progression barriers for BME staff from an institutional and individual perspective.

In looking at the rationale for conducting this research, as an academic and practitioner working in FE, I recognise the strategic and political importance attached to this challenge. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) report, *'Further Education: Raising skills, improving life chances'* (2006), the *'Leitch Review of Skills'* final report (2006) and the Lifelong Learning UK's (LLUK) *'Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007-2012 (revised)'* (2009c), make a clear commitment to promoting greater equality and a more diverse workforce. These key LSS policies signal that all staff should have an opportunity to play a role in resolving the succession crisis that the sector is facing.

This context amplifies concerns that many stakeholders, including the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) (FE skills council), have about the relatively low numbers of BME staff progressing to leadership positions within FE. An additional professional concern regarding the importance of undertaking this research is the possible impact of the current difficult global economic conditions that all organisations and individuals are facing. Evidence suggests that the last time there was a recession, nationally the number of BME managers

decreased. This trend is discussed in the Race for Opportunity (RfO) benchmarking report (2009) which states:

“There is further evidence from past recessions that unemployment rates for ethnic minorities rise faster than they do for the white population and that they experience a ‘ratchet effect’ whereby they are unable to recoup these losses during recovery and so start a cycle worse off than in the previous cycle” (p15)

This research is important as it recognises that in order to meet the sector's succession planning challenges and to facilitate an appropriately strong contribution from all staff groups, we need to maintain this dialogue by understanding and hearing the experiences of staff from minority groups and from the managers and leaders who have an impact on their progression. The study uses the outcomes to draw conclusions and make recommendations to the sector for sustainable change at an economically difficult time which threatens to, yet again, ‘sweep this issue under the carpet’.

I anticipate findings from this research will encourage colleges and stakeholders in the sector to look at their internal and micro-political organisational practices and to review their approaches to ‘race’ training and continuing professional development approaches. It is hoped that organisations will review the findings from this research and use them to support the identification of the ‘below the line’ issues that exist and which maintain the status quo of this persistent glass-ceiling syndrome.

1.5 Research context, research questions and sources of data

Three key research questions and a range of research methods to be used in this study have been identified. Information was collected from four sources.

The first data source consisted of a documentary analysis of national strategic reports and policies which focused on leadership and diversity issues in FE and the wider LSS. Other reading, which forms part of the literature review, included an examination of theories and models of 'race' and discrimination through journals, books and articles on the subject and other perspectives of diversity in the context of academic research.

An analysis of data collected during an earlier study and reported on in *Succession Planning and Racial Equality in the Further Education System* (Barnett, Deane and Gittens, 2008), formed the second area of information gathering. This research was undertaken on behalf of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) who decided to revisit this field of policy research to identify how far the position of BME staff had changed in the six years since the Commission for Black Staff in FE (CBSFE). As a member of the research team who undertook this earlier study, I had access to the raw and analysed data that informed the report findings which focused on the impact the lack of BME representation at leadership levels was having on the succession planning crisis in FE and sixth form colleges. The data from this research included responses from questionnaires completed by a range of participants working in colleges and providers in England and it was this data that was analysed for the purpose of my thesis and the research conducted in 2009.

The third and fourth sources of data were collected through primary research activities and included semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The research questions, methods and sources of data are summarised in Figure 1 and will be further elaborated on in the third chapter.

Figure 1: Research questions, methods and sources of data

RESEARCH QUESTION	RESEARCH METHOD	SOURCES OF DATA
1. What impact have succession management strategies and initiatives between 2002 and 2009 had on the progression of BME staff in FE?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary Analysis - statistical information • Examination of pre-collected interview response data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSS policy, strategic and LSS workforce data reports • Secondary research; <i>"Succession Planning and Racial Equality in the Further Education System"</i> (2008)
2. What are the current progression barriers and facilitators facing BME staff in FE?	• Semi-Structured interviews	• Primary research (2009)
	• Focus groups	• Primary research (2009)
3. How might LSS institutions internally address equality and diversity issues in relation to the progression of BME staff?	• Semi-Structured interviews	• Primary research (2009)

1.6 Ethical Issues

Ethically, a crucial part of this investigation is the issue of my own position as a Black researcher working in the sector. The subject being investigated is a sensitive and intrinsically ethical issue in its own right and a heightened awareness of this sensitivity was required and observed at all stages of the activity.

One of the ethical frameworks I adopted for this study was based on a 'model of responsibility' taken from a feminist research model put forward by Margaret Urban Walker (1997) and further developed and discussed in Edwards and Mauthner (2002). Morley (1999a) also considers the ethical issue of collecting data from colleagues with similar views, from the feminist school of research perspective, and her work was reviewed in this context. The other model I used was that put forward by Ahern (1999) which uses reflexivity to identify areas of potential researcher bias in order to ensure that the process of collecting the data and analysing and interpreting the findings is as impartial and objective as possible.

Particular attention was paid to the interpretation of oral histories as discussed by Roberts (2002) who raises the issue of ethical difficulties for both the researcher and the participants when undertaking biographical research. All of these models are discussed further in the methodology section of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2

Key concepts and definitions

2.1 Who are Black and Minority Ethnic Staff?

The term 'Black and Minority Ethnic' (BME) is made up of three terms which together demonstrate and acknowledge the development of historical, political and social movements to describe people from minority groups who have experienced racism because of their skin colour or ethnicity.

2.1.1 Defining the term 'Black'

The term 'Black' was originally used to refer to people of African descent and it has gone through a number of interpretations, perceptions and changes since the 1950's. In the biological sense, being described as 'black' is associated with having a very dark skin colour. It originally replaced terminologies applied to those of African descent such as 'nigger', 'negro' and other derogatory terms. The term 'black' gained positive connotations during and following the North American Civil Rights Movement which not only redefined the term to refer to people who were suffering from white racism, but which also successfully promoted the perception of pride in those people who identified themselves as being black. There have been attempts in the UK to use the socio-political meaning of 'black' to try and unite people of colour and those from minority groups who experience racism. In the United Kingdom (UK), the 1991 census was the first to include a question on ethnicity. Currently, census classifications of ethnicity are confused, with African/Caribbean groups being categorised under colour and other groups including Asian and Chinese under codes according to national origins such as Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani.⁴ The racial or ethnic census classification of 'black' is not an indicator of skin colour and refers to people with a range of skin pigmentation.

However, the term 'black' has always been controversial when used in this context and there is an ongoing debate about the validity and acceptance of

⁴ 2011 Census classification of Ethnic group
<http://s248054552.websitehome.co.uk/HE01/HEA/002%20Ethnic%20Origin%20Codes.pdf>

this phrase. In some communities it has been challenged as being divisive, unhelpful and suggesting uniformity, leading to generalisations and stereotyping. The term is now increasingly being used to specifically describe people of African or African-Caribbean origin.

2.1.2 Defining the term 'Minority Ethnic'

Recent years in the UK have found, the term 'black' becoming less inclusive and less used in the political and social sense. It has been replaced by terms such as 'Black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME)', 'Black and ethnic minority', and 'Black minority ethnic (BME)'. The term minority ethnic draws attention to ethnic commonality and shared experiences and Feagin (1984) states that a minority group has five distinguishing characteristics: they are discriminated against, they have physical and/or cultural traits that set them apart from the dominant group, they have an ethnic commonality and common burdens, they hold socially shared rule about who belongs to that minority group and they tend to marry within the group. These characteristics indicate that it is the non-inclusion of particular types of ethnicity which results in a minority status. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) is an attempt at more comprehensive coverage with the term having some impact on those aware of the issues. Although it is commonly used in the UK, it is still not yet widespread in the general public and can be the cause of some confusion and unpopularity. It does, however, still remain a term of convention for 'visible minorities' rather than minorities in general and continues to be controversial, particularly for those who identify themselves as suffering racism because of their cultural ethnicity (e.g. those from Eastern European, Gaelic or from a traveller background).

The term 'visible minority' is often used to describe people from ethnic minority communities who are more 'visible' and have characteristics such as skin colour or dress which make them stand out from the majority group. Some UK studies and publications refer to 'visible minorities' in an academic and political context, (Ballard, 1999; Coussey, 2002) however, it was further moved by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in 2004 to address and counter charges of racism, standardise the phraseology being used by the

MPS and demonstrate a recognition of the potential for the differential treatment of 'visible' and 'non-visible' minorities that encouraged wider use of the term at government policy level⁵. At a Commission for Racial Equality conference in 2006⁶, Labour MP Sadiq Khan said it was more difficult for members of "visible minorities" such as himself to integrate into British society;

"There is a tension, which some of you may have noticed, between the newly-arrived Eastern Europeans who, frankly, in a generation or two will be accepted and will feel integrated and people...who were born and raised here, and who generations on still, because we are visible minorities, may not feel as integrated as others"(2006)

2.1.3 Defining 'BME' staff

In the context of this research the term BME is the one that has been adopted and refers specifically to members of African, Caribbean, Asian and other 'visible' minority ethnic communities who face racism. This is due to the fact that findings and observations from previous studies concerning FE leadership and staff progression have revealed that sector staff who are from this background experience the most discrimination (*Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Barnett, P., Deane H. and Gittens, I., 2008*). Although this decision may be controversial, this is by no means an attempt to exclude other people from a much wider range of geographic, cultural and linguistic background but rather to highlight the issue for this particular group of staff.

Having said that, there is a great awareness of the sensitivity of this decision and the potential for debate or further research which incorporates the other minority ethnic communities who also face racism.

⁵ Blacks and Asians? No, they're 'visible minority ethnics' say police
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1479775/Blacks-and-Asians-No-theyre-visible-minority-ethnics-say-police.html> [accessed 21 Jan 2012]

⁶ Visible minorities 'not accepted' http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6188908.stm
[accessed 21 Jan 2012]

2.1.4 Reviewing the definition of BME staff

A key factor I recognise and have identified when reviewing the terminology associated with those experiencing racism in UK society is the need to acknowledge that by focusing on the differences, this can divide communities. It can take away from the key issue of the shared experiences of minority groups and people who are victims of political, economic and social discrimination and oppression. Whilst acknowledging that the terminology debate is ongoing and that there is a need for all 'race' researchers to better understand and examine the diversity of black, Asian and minority communities, for the purpose of this thesis, the definition of "Black" and "Minority Ethnic" (BME) refers to and emphasises the common experience and determination of people of African, African-Caribbean and Asian origin who are subjected to, combat and oppose the effects of racism in the FE sector.

2.2 Defining 'Race'

The term 'race' is controversial and is based on historical efforts to categorise people according to their skin colour and other physical characteristics. A full analysis of 'race' could easily become a thesis in its own right, and due to the scope of this paper, this section basically offers a brief overview of the ways that 'race' may be defined, rather than providing an in-depth examination of the concept. In brief, a commonly held view of a person's 'race' is based on the premise of physical and biological differences. (Robb, 1995) suggests that the concept of 'race';

" included any [essentializing] of groups of people which held them to display inherent, heritable, persistent or predictive characteristics, and which thus had a biological or quasi-biological basis" (p1)

However, the theory of race is continually developing, with a widely held belief that the word has no scientific basis for divisions into biologically determined groups and is a social construct based on physical characteristics that have acquired socially significant meaning (Banton, 1983; Loury, 2002; Omi and Winant, 1986). Other characteristics, including name, dress and diet, can also be factors in determining racial category (Nagel, 1994). This

social meaning is dependent on collective acceptance and agreement, largely defined by the dominant group in society. It follows therefore that 'race' implies differences in status that can include or exclude a person or 'racial' group from other social constructs and is the reason why it is seen by some as the most divisive aspect of Western society. The term however, is in everyday use, is endorsed in UK legislation through various and developing 'race' relations Acts and is referred to in most studies relating to leadership and diversity in the FE sector.

On the theoretical status of the concept of race, Omi and Winant (1993) state that;

“The main task facing racial theory today...is no longer to problematize a seemingly “natural” or “common sense” concept of race..... Rather, our central work is to focus attention on the *continuing significance and changing meaning of race.*”

In the academic world the word 'race' is often used with quotation marks to acknowledge that it is a controversial term.

The approach of using quotation marks when discussing and using the word 'race' has been adopted for this thesis and acknowledges my shared view that the term is not only controversial, but was historically magnified politically and socially to serve the purposes of the development of European imperialism, power and colonisation and, as such, is a term that has served to under-develop and divide particular communities.

2.3 What is Racism?

There are a multitude of definitions of racism and many legal, academic and practitioner based discussions on the topic highlight a range of ways the term is defined. Miles (1993) acknowledges that 'there are different ways of conceptualising and theorising racism' (p2), however the fundamental origin of the concept is based on the belief in racial differences which justifies unequal treatment of the members of that race. The main approaches to the notion of racism as understood and examined in this thesis include the UK legal definition of race; overt and covert racism; internalised racism;

horizontal racism; the issue of reverse racism and 'institutional racism' as defined by McPherson (1999).

2.3.1 Race Discrimination - The legal definition:

In general, racism is associated with activities that are illegal or damaging to those individuals who experience it and it is therefore equated to the phrase 'racial discrimination'. The UK legal system does not define 'racism' but the Equality Act 2010 does define 'race discrimination' as occurring "*when a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin*". It recognises that there are four main types of racial discrimination: direct, indirect, victimisation and harassment.⁷

2.3.2 'Overt Racism'

When the words 'racist' or 'racism' is used, unfortunately, most people think of the blatant, public and conscious acts of bigotry that can range from verbal or physical racial abuse to the policies of political parties such as the British National Party (BNP), the British far right political party who advocate policies such as the repatriation of immigrant descendants⁸. This is what is being referred to when we define '*overt racism*'. In reality, most members of minority groups in the UK will not encounter overt racism or be affected by BNP policy. Instead, BME people in the UK are much more likely to be the victims of subtle acts of racism, which is referred to as '*covert racism*' (Coates, 2007; Alvarez, 2010).

2.3.3 'Covert Racism'

Also known as '*everyday racism*' this is a much more common but less public and obvious form of racism. Examples of covert racist behaviours can range

⁷ The following link contains detailed information regarding the types of 'racial discrimination' as recognised by the Equality Act (2010): <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/your-rights/race/what-is-race-discrimination/what-forms-does-racial-discrimination-take/>

⁸ It should be noted that since 2001 the BNP has publicly changed its policies on race and claims to no longer promote white supremacy; "*The BNP is not a 'race supremacist' party. The BNP does not claim that any one race is superior to any other, simply that they are different. The party merely wishes to preserve those differences which make up the rich tapestry of human kind... to protect and preserve the racial and cultural integrity of the British people – and of others to – the party believe in separation...*" (The BNP and Races, *The Voice of Freedom*, January, 2001, p4)

from not interacting with people because of their race, excluding people of certain cultural backgrounds from public services and places, to assuming that a person from a BME Caribbean background is from Jamaica or uttering covert racist comments such as mentioning somebody's race out of context; *"...we met this really nice black man"....."I know lots of black people"*.

Coates (2007) defines the concept as referring to:

'...those subtle and subversive institutional or societal practices, policies, and norms utilized to mask structural racial' (p212).

He describes the associated behaviours as

'..... subtle, subversive, and deliberate informal and formal mechanisms that allow differential access to rewards, prestige, sanctions, status, and privileges based on racial hierarchies' (p211)

One of the over-riding characteristics of covert racism is the fact that when attention is brought to these subtle incidents, attempts are usually made to minimise or trivialise complaints. In terms of the impact on those who experience covert racism, a study by Alvin Alvarez (2010) found that though these incidents may sometimes seem innocent and small, this form of racism has a 'taxing' and destructive effect.

In the context of this thesis, this form of racism is important to consider and understand due to the increasing difficulty in identifying and substantiating covert racist incidents in FE institutions.

2.3.4 Internalised Racism

Internalised racism is when a person from a minority group either consciously or unconsciously accepts the dominant groups' racist views and stereotype about their own ethnic group. Bivens (2005) provides this definition;

"As people of color are victimized by racism, we internalize it. That is, we develop ideas, beliefs, actions and behaviors that support or collude with racism" (p44)

In the context of this study, this would involve a BME person believing that White-Europeans are superior and a typical example can be seen where some BME managers unfairly discriminate against other BME members of their team based on the stereotypical views held by other staff.

2.3.5 Horizontal Racism

Horizontal racism occurs when members of minority groups adopt negative attitudes and prejudice towards other minority groups (Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, & Love, 1997). An example of this would be if a BME manager of Asian descent decided to prevent the employment of a person of an African-Caribbean background in their department, based on the racist stereotype of BME people found in mainstream culture. There is a commonly held view by BME staff in the FE sector that many of their colleagues 'pull up the ladder' once they have reached certain positions.

2.3.6 Institutional Racism

The term *institutional racism* was first used by the US civil rights leader and Black Nationalist Stokely Carmichael in the United States in the late 1960's. In 1981, Lord Scarman referred to the term in his report following the Brixton disturbances. At that time, a number of academics including Dorn and Troyna (1982) argued that the notion of institutional racism was not clear enough to guide educational policy or to establish a basis for research as education policies and debates. Troyna and Williams (1986) observed that though concerned with colour and 'race', education policies at that time had been '*formulated and presented largely in deracialised terms*' (p60). Other academics reported their belief that the needs of people from BME backgrounds had been "*.....subsumed under a collection of racially inexplicit categories such as language, educational deprivation, cultural adjustment which have become the bases for various policy initiatives*" (Kowalczewski, 1982 p145). However, in order to attempt to develop and address the concept of institutional racism in education, anti-racist education policies were developed in Britain by community activists and often supported by local education authorities and trade unions. The anti-racist approach included the review and change of laws, customs and practices which had

been legitimated by authorities and which had operated to the disadvantage of BME communities. This included an attempt in the 1980's to address general working cultures in education as well as the negative staff-room culture that existed towards non-'Western' traditions and heritages.

Incorporation of further education colleges took place in the spring of 1993, following the implementation of the 1992 FHE Act. It brought in a new set of external constraints and leadership challenges to the sector as FE institutions became autonomous and self-regulating organisations. Some would argue that incorporation of cultivated a new ethos, which took diversity and thus anti-racism issues off the agenda. Concerns about the impact that incorporation had on the equalities agenda were highlighted in a report by Farish et al (1995). Many colleges took the opportunity to 'restructure' and the CFBSFE found that;

“A number of witnesses believed that good equalities practice had been eroded because of college merger or restructuring activities”
(p60)

The term institutional racism became more prominent in FE and all public sector organisations in 1998 after it was used by a range of witnesses at the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, in allegations against the Metropolitan police. It was defined by McPherson as;

‘The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people’ (MacPherson Report, 1999: 6.34)

2.3.7 Micro-politics – another form of institutional racism?

Hoyle (1982) describes the concept of micro-politics as “*an organisational underworld which we all recognise and in which we all participate, although not always consciously*” (p87). Blase (1991) defines it as being;

“...about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends” (p1)

Micro-politics is about power, influence, networks and the use of political and personal strategies. In terms of opportunities for individuals in the workplace, some evidence suggests that organisational cultures and micro-political practices will determine who does and does not get promoted (Hoyle, 1982). This gives us an insight into the effect that micro-political systems can have on the progression of the individual and indeed of groups of professionals within an FE institution and the sector as a whole. Micro-politics can stifle certain groups and destabilise people, making them feel insecure, undermined and excluded. It is demonstrated by a number of subtle acts such as alliance building among dominant groups, throwaway remarks, trivial incidents and transactions and important items falling off the agenda (Deane, 2004).

An examination of the literature reveals a number of theoretical approaches to micro-politics, which encompass a range of systems that describe micro-political activities that extend beyond the formal decision-making processes. Most of the studies reviewed recognised that formal organisational policies, goals and processes are ignored when micro-political activity is underway, shown by Mayes and Allen (1977) who state that micro-politics is;

“...the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organisation or to obtain ends through non-sanctioned influence means” (p675)

Susan Sturm (2001) uses the term "second generation discrimination" to define the more subtle and hidden forms of discrimination that are entrenched in our institutions and social norms and recognises that as a result of this discrimination, women and minorities do not have the same access to informal networking, mentoring, training, and other contributors to advancement that white men have always enjoyed. Instead, these groups

experience biases that work against them in employment and advancement opportunities. Sturm goes on to acknowledge that these more hidden and subtle discriminatory practices are difficult to address using legislation processes:

“The complex behavioural aspects underlying various forms of discrimination, including hostile work environments, subjective employment practices, and glass ceilings, are consequently somewhat intractable using traditional legal approaches” (p101)

Based on this definition and understanding of micro-politics, I would argue that the impact and outcomes of this level of institutional behaviour on BME FE professionals clearly parallels the behaviours I would associate with institutional racism.

2.3.8 Reverse Racism

Reverse racism is a controversial concept and term which refers to discriminatory practices against the dominant racial group. The term is often used as a precursor argument against systems that are put in place to support the advancement of members of racial minorities such as positive action, positive discrimination or the US affirmative action schemes. Affirmative action refers to a range of strategies and initiatives that the US government have adopted to deal with the fact that white males are disproportionately represented in lucrative professions including surgeons, lawyers and college professors. This study refers to positive action programmes which, as will be demonstrated, have been criticised by some as being a form of reverse racism.

2.4 Positive Action, Positive Discrimination and Affirmative Action

Quite often positive action is confused and interpreted as positive discrimination and positive discrimination is thought of as a form of affirmative action. All three terms are separate from each other and brief descriptions are given in order to ensure clarification of the definitions I am using in this study.

Positive Action is the term I use to describe activities and initiatives designed to provide under-represented groups with training, familiarisation and other programmes, which will enable them to compete for jobs on an equal footing with over-represented groups. In contrast to positive discrimination limited forms of positive action, for example in the form of training and development programmes, are allowed under all strands of discrimination legislation. Ruff (2006) points out that '*positive discrimination*' should be distinguished from positive action.

Positive Discrimination describes the process of giving more favourable treatment to a group or individual to the detriment of others. An example of this could be allowing an individual from an under-represented group to bypass the entry requirements for a particular vacancy and move straight into the job. This process is classified as unlawful discrimination in the UK, although there are exceptions to this principle. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA), the Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA) and more recently the European Race and Employment Directives 2000 state that in very limited circumstances, an employer can claim that it is permissible and, in some circumstances even necessary that people of a certain religion, belief, gender, disability or 'race' are necessary to fill a particular role. In other words, it is considered to be a genuine occupational requirement.

Affirmative Action is the initiative first used by the Americans to redress imbalances in employment. This specific term was first used by President Kennedy to describe US government policy in 1961 and was a method of redressing discrimination that had persisted in spite of civil rights law and constitutional guarantees (Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (OEOD), 2005). It was developed further by President Johnson who introduced affirmative action programmes through targeted outreach and recruitment efforts for minorities and women. It does not mean that job and qualification requirements are overlooked, however it does stipulate that where jobs exist, people are appointed from the over-represented group, and the under-represented group at a pre-agreed ratio, to address the balance. The important thing to observe is that the selection for both groups must be from

a pool of qualified and suitably experienced applicants ensuring that standards remain the same for all.

It is worth noting that Affirmative Action policies have been used by the UK Government on a number of occasions both directly and indirectly. One example is demonstrated by the recruitment policies adopted during the reformation of the Police service in Northern Ireland where for each new officer from the Protestant Community employed, an equal number from the Catholic Community was also employed (Patten, 1999).

The previous New Labour Government also employed this in the selection of its Members of Parliament (MP's) by choosing several women prospective MPs. This was so that the Commons would be more representative of the population it serves. We also have the same system being tried in Iraq where the Interim Government is made up of peoples from all the groups that make up the country. The new leader of the Conservative party has stated his intention to use Affirmative Action to increase the numbers of female MP's (Daily Telegraph, 2010).

2.5 A Review of Definitions of Racism – an approach for the examination of barriers to the progression of BME staff in FE

Dr Charles R Ridley, an American based psychologist has published numerous journal articles and book chapters in his field of counselling and psychology and one definition of racism he uses separates the concept into different types of behaviours. I have found this definition very useful to support the fundamental approach I have taken for my research. He defines racism as;

“...any behaviour or pattern of behaviour that tends to systematically deny access to opportunities or privileges to members of one racial group while perpetuating access to opportunities and privileges to members of another racial group” (1995, p28)

This definition by Ridley is based on a behavioural model of racism and racist behaviour consisting of five key features. The first of these features he

describes as '*many possible behaviours*'. It recognises that when most people think about racist behaviour they think of the extremist and blatant acts of prejudice practised by a few fanatics in our society. One of the most prominent cases in the UK is that of the April 1993 murder of Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager from South London who, while waiting at a bus stop, was stabbed to death by a group of young white men who had never seen him before. As Ridley states '*racism is more...than a few notorious acts of violence*' (p29) and by recognising this he makes the point that even the most covert act of racism can have harmful consequences.

The second feature Ridley describes as '*systematic behaviour*' and by referring to general systems theory, the interdisciplinary field that studies the nature of complex systems in society, he demonstrates that racism is a problem of social and therefore all organisational systems. This feature recognises that any efforts to change racism in organisations – even the behaviour of individuals – must include a systems perspective and approach.

The third component of his definition is described as '*preferential treatment*' and it acknowledges that in a fair system everybody has an equal opportunity without being unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged. Where racism exists, members of the dominant or preferred group have an unfair advantage. In the case of FE, in this study suggests that White-European staff have an advantage over BME staff when being selected for leadership positions.

The next component looks at what Ridley describes as '*inequitable outcomes*'. Ridley explains this as "... giving benefits to members of the majority groups.....which may be psychological, social, economic, material or political" (p33). In this context it is clear that the white-European community will consistently find themselves in an advantageous position over minority groups. Consistent inequitable outcomes can be found very easily in FE, for example, to date the sector has 11 BME principals comprising three per cent of all college principals. Further statistics are given later on in the study which also demonstrates how leadership paradigms and models often categorise people, favouring those leadership styles which are

consistent with traditional Western values. These paradigms can contribute to unintentional racist outcomes, which might go some way to explain this view of inequitable outcomes in terms of senior leadership representation in FE.

Finally, Ridley describes the fifth component as '*nonrandom victimisation*'. With this component he reviews how in a fair society and system the repeated discrimination of BME people is unlikely. However, as will be demonstrated in some of the testimonies of BME staff interviewed for this research, when a high rate of BME staff continue to leave FE at Middle and Senior Management level or when first line managers continue to be passed over for promotion it can become hard to explain these outcomes as random and by chance. Ridley echoes this view when he states that '*systematic influence is a more plausible explanation*' (p35).

By using this behavioural model to define racism, we can begin to link the existence of the 'covert' everyday racist practices that have micro-political implications. We can also begin to analyse issues relating to various forms of institutional racism which might include unintentional racist acts. It is these acts which are the most insidious because of their micro-political nature which usually goes unnoticed by those in positions of power, if not the victim. This approach recognises however, the importance of locating new paradigms, theories and approaches to address these more subtle forms of racism and this is where Critical Race Theory has role in terms of this study.

2.6 Critical Race Theory

2.6.1 Introduction

Critical Race Theory (CRT) though a relatively new field of enquiry and concept in the UK is a way of looking at 'race' and race relations in a broader context than has traditionally been seen. The theory was developed out of the work of writers like Derrick Bell (1987) who recognised that new theories and strategies were needed to address the more subtle forms of racism. With origins based in the legal field, CRT appeared in US law schools in the

mid to late 1980's. It inherited its foundations from civil rights scholarship and Critical Legal Studies (CLS) and it extended from law and legal studies spreading beyond that discipline and across continents.

CRT has begun to influence social science literature and is now also an emergent tool in the field of enquiry in education. In the UK, academics are using the concept and ideas of CRT to understand issues around education inequalities, teaching, learning and pedagogy and institutional hierarchies. (e.g. Gillborn, 2006; Gillborn 2008; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009; Cole, 2009).

2.6.2 Defining CRT

CRT has been defined by Delgado and Stefancic (2001) as;

“..... a movement that studies and attempts to transform the relationship between race and power by examining the role of race and racism within the foundations of modern culture as a movement, it has moved beyond law and has now become common in the academic disciplines of ethnic studies, political science and education” (p2-3)

Gillborn (2006) also posits that rather than a theory;

“...it is a set of interrelated beliefs about the significance of race/racism and how it operates in contemporary western society” (p19)

2.6.3 Main Tenets of CRT

There are five main tenets of CRT and they have both formed the basis of the framework I have adopted for this study and have guided my analysis of the data I have used.

- The centrality of race and racism in society where CRT asserts that racism is a permanent component of UK society
- An inter-relational perspective that places race and racism in a contemporary and historical context using inter-disciplinary methods

- Challenging the status quo and the dominant ideology of colour-blindness and meritocracy in society
- The commitment to a moral and human rights agenda in order to eliminate all forms of social injustice
- A commitment to the principle of experiential knowledge which is seen as appropriate and an integral part to analysing and understanding racial inequality

Having adopted the above tenets for the framework of this study I would suggest that this is a framework that can be considered for any academic discourse on 'race'.

2.6.4 Other CRT themes relating to the study of BME leadership in FE

As well as these five fundamental elements, another aspect of CRT which relates to the context of this study is the issue of what some American academics call '*interest convergence*'. According to Bell (2004):

"The interests of African-Americans (and people of color) in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when that converges with the interests of Whites who are in policy-making positions" (p69).

Bell continues;

"even when the interest-convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at the point that policy makers fear the remedial policy is threatening the superior societal status of Whites" (p69).

This is a view that considers moves to address racism as advancing certain groups materialistically and physically. In order to explain this, and in the context of this study, I look to the push in a range of organisations in the public sector towards the use of positive action leadership development programmes and consider whether these may not necessarily be encouraged only to develop the leadership capacity of BME staff. I would also consider that this push might be for the self-interest of white leaders who are recognising that without the engagement and support of BME professionals

the FE leadership crisis will become chronic and organisations and ultimately the learners will suffer. This is a controversial view, which for me echoes the sentiment of many who believe the emancipation movement would not have ended slavery at that time if it was not for the fact that financially and materialistically, the white elite were suffering due to the number of slave revolts and the commercial impact of the increasingly negative reputation of the slave industry.

A further theme of CRT, which I sign up to, is that of '*social construction*' which sees 'race' and racism as concepts that society and organisations devise and influence. My reasoning for this in the context of placing myself in the academia of this study is the recognition that although certain groups do share physical traits this is a very small part of their genetic and cultural background. It is of great interest to me how FE quality improvement and professional development bodies still ignore the multi- dimensionality of BME people and continue to develop leaders through a one-size fits all approach and to the White-European understanding of leadership traits. CRT has also criticised this dominant nature of leadership thinking, and Lumby and Coleman (2007) echo this sentiment when they state;

"Critical race theory has also critiqued hegemonic notions of leadership suggesting that the voice of minority ethnic educators is absent in its creation". (p69)

Together with these considerations introduced by CRT, I would argue that at times, when it is to the benefit of the dominant society, the stereotypical view of minority groups can be influenced, in response to shifting needs. For example the recent leadership crisis in FE has influenced the way some aspiring BME leaders are being perceived and evidence later in the study will demonstrate that in some cases, BME professionals are no longer being viewed as '*not being ready for leadership*' (BME Chair of governors) or '*the angry set of clever but challenging staff with issues about their race but who are effective when appointed*' (Interviewee, white principal)).

The final element to the CRT approach engaged in this study is the issue of narrative and life history research methodology. I believe that because of the

different histories and experiences of oppression that BME staff go through, they are in the strongest position to communicate these experiences to their white counterparts. My work urges and encourages BME staff to share and recount their stories as well as to create their own constructs and interpretations around their life histories.

2.6.5 CRT and Colour Blindness

CRT takes the view that racism is ordinary, everyday, normal business and in some form or fashion is experienced by all BME people in the UK. Looking at race relations critically is a key part of CRT which argues that examining these everyday interactions, and finding the racial component in them, can help move the racial equality cause forward perhaps more than a sometimes simplistic '*colour blind*' approach. Colour blindness is a perception that people from a BME background are no different from non-minority people. There are several factors that can cause some individuals to adopt this approach including deep-rooted guilt complexes about being racist, feeling uncomfortable about discussing 'race', having personal issues about 'race', trying to be protective of BME people and not wanting to hurt their feelings to simply misunderstanding issues of 'race' and discrimination and for BME individuals, wanting to pretend that colour is 'not an issue'.

When referring to organisational systems and policies which adopt the colour blind approach we talk about systems or formal conceptions of equality expressed in across-the-board policies that can act as remedies for the most overt forms of discrimination. This type of approach and policy is more often in place to address overt acts of racism such as declining to appoint a highly qualified and experienced BME staff member in favour of a white member of staff who happens to stand out only because of his or her relationship with the senior management team.

For the more covert practices such as preparing the white member of staff through meeting socially, discussing interview questions or introducing them to interviewers, taking a colour blind approach is not effective. This is an aspect of 'race' theory that I can relate to and place myself within, as it

highlights for me, the sense and understanding of how difficult it is to 'cure' racism, particularly if you look at the initial steps of finding a cure as first educating yourself about these theories and practices before learning about the cause of the condition.

To better understand this theory and definition in the context of my study, we can consider the experience shared by one of the interviewees who discussed situations where her contribution and suggestions in Head of Department (HOD) meetings were ignored and yet when white colleagues made the same suggestions, these were then heard and acknowledged. Her view was that this was a form of everyday institutional racism experienced on a regular basis by her and her BME colleagues, a view not shared or acknowledged by her White-European counterparts. To critically examine this situation from a CRT perspective, one would have to encourage all concerned to consider if the response from the rest of those at the meeting would have been different if it was a white person who had attempted to make the first contribution. We might also think about what the reaction to her initial contributions would have been if the rest of those at the meeting were all black colleagues. In each of these considerations, our understanding of the interpretation of this behaviour may be more tempered than if we were to take a more traditional approach to the interpretation of institutional racism.

2.6.6 CRT – Limitations and areas for development

In terms of the UK perspective, one of the perceived limitations to the use of the term CRT is the different perceptions and histories minority ethnic people from the US have experienced around 'race' and racism. At present, many of the CRT themes are based on 'race' issues in US terms inheriting many of its political commitments from the Civil Rights movement, with CRT theorists paying particular attention to affirmative action. However it cannot be ignored that the basic ideology of the concept of 'race' as discussed earlier, is common to both Europe and the US.

CRT can seem threatening and alienating to the many people who believe that racism is a thing of the past and is no longer a major issue, particularly in the FE sector (DeCuir and Dixon, 2004), and this study provides examples of people who hold this view.

CRT has found many critics who dismiss the findings of studies that use the framework. Darder and Torres (2004) criticise the theory mainly because they question the validity of an emancipatory movement that is based entirely on 'race' which they believe overlooks the issue of class. They see class as being the key to social inequality and argue that;

“...all forms of social inequality are defined by class relations or motivated by the persistent drive to perpetuate class inequality.....racism is operationalized through racialized class relations” (p109)

They also reflect on the term 'white supremacy' and determine that focusing on this ideology ignores the;

“...historical and contemporary oppression of populations who have been treated as distinct and inferior “races” without the necessary reference to color” (p111)

CRT has not yet reached its full potential and is a theory that could become more powerful as an academic tool of race enquiry across a range of disciplines. It has the potential to make substantial progress towards eliminating racial injustices if the theory was more accessible beyond the fields of law and education.

2.6.7 CRT – An advance on previous studies of BME leadership and 'race' in the FE sector

CRT as a theory of 'race' and racism in the study of leadership has not yet been considered as research framework. And this thesis extends the use of the theory to the field of leadership development.

In line with the view of Gillborn (2006) and that of Ridley's definition of racism discussed earlier I recognise the importance of the central notion of the term

'racism' not only being used in relation to the obvious acts of racial prejudice and hatred, but also in relation to the subtle and hidden operations of micro-politics and power that disadvantage BME groups in the FE sector and wider. Like Gillborn, I recognise that this is a more radical approach to 'race' theory that many in FE would not be comfortable with. By using CRT as a framework to examine leadership, management and inequality in FE, sector policy-makers and senior leaders in our colleges and providers have to acknowledge the fact that racism is endemic in our sector, which is a bitter pill to swallow. The impact of such an acknowledgment could only be to take drastic measures to address the situation.

2.6.8 CRT as the research framework applied to this thesis

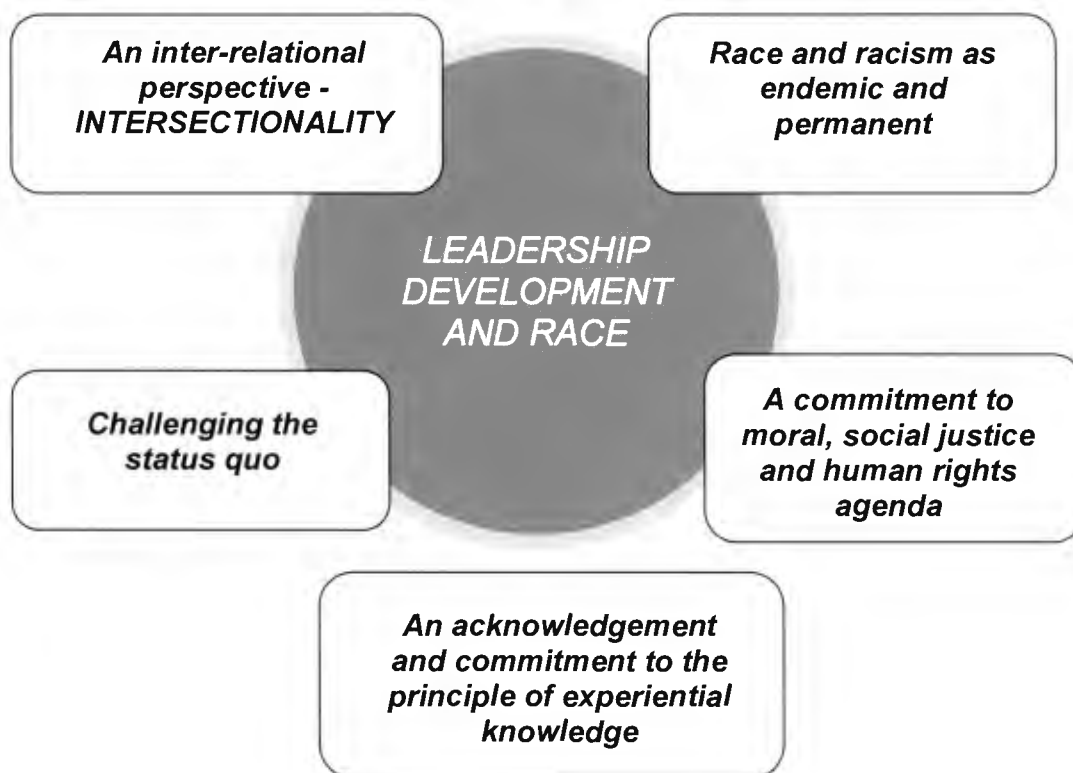
To support the development of a framework that I could adopt for this research, I adapted a methodology offered by CRT researchers in education and defined a theoretical approach that incorporated a range of interdisciplinary academic traditions including law, sociology, history, 'race' and culture studies and feminist approaches. The framework acknowledges the importance of life experiences and the need for a variety of epistemological standpoints to be employed. In particular it allows for a narrative and life history approach to be taken account of as well as the use of other forms of data and factors which are needed to fully inform leadership and management development studies.

In its application to this thesis my decision to use CRT as a framework is exemplified by Ladson-Billings (2000) who explained in the context of her work with CRT in education that;

"CRT asks the critical qualitative researcher to operate in a self-revelatory mode, to acknowledge the double (or multiple) consciousness in which she is operating. My decision to deploy a critical race theoretical framework in my scholarship is intimately linked to my understanding of the political and personal stake I have in the education of Black children. All of my "selves" are invested in this work—the self that is a researcher, the self that is a parent, the self that is a community member, the self that is a Black woman. (p. 272)

Adapted from a CRT methodology put forward by Solórzano and Yosso (2009), Figure 2 illustrates the framework I have constructed for researching leadership development and 'race' studies underpinned by five key tenets.

Figure 2: A Framework for Researching Leadership Development and 'Race'



i) An inter-relational perspective

In the context of this research, a CRT framework allows for the complexities involved in adopting a range of methodological approaches. It supports clarity of understanding of the effect that racism, sexism and classism has had on BME staff in FE.

ii) 'Race' and racism as endemic and permanent

In parallel with other studies around CRT methodology, CRT in leadership development studies and as stated by Solórzano and Yosso (2009);

".....starts from the premise that race and racism are endemic, permanent, and in the words of Margaret Russell (1992), 'a central rather than marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of the law'" (pg133)

iii) *Challenging the status quo*

CRT challenges the status quo of leadership approaches by colleges and providers, which generally take the colour blind approach to their internal organisational behaviours and practices. This is also reflected in the way that sector leadership development research and studies are conducted. My argument is that you cannot live in a true meritocracy without acknowledging that neutral and objective leadership approaches and research methods are not possible when traditional approaches continue to act as a disguise for maintaining the status quo of the power, self interest and privilege of predominantly white, male colleagues.

iv) *A commitment to moral, social justice and human rights agenda*

CRT researchers in education acknowledge that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways and can oppress as well as emancipate and empower learners. Using CRT methodology in leadership also recognises that multi-discriminatory factors in FE can and are in some cases being effectively resisted. As indicated by Solórzano and Yosso (2009), CRT is committed to social justice and offers a '*liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender and class oppression*' (p133).

v) *An acknowledgement and commitment to the principle of experiential knowledge*

One of the main tenets of the framework is an acknowledgment that, together with an undertaking to challenge the status quo, a commitment to the centrality of the experiential knowledge of BME staff is significant factor in understanding the leadership development and progression issues of LSS BME staff. CRT in leadership development methodology '*challenges traditional research paradigms, texts and theories used to explain the experiences of BME staff*' (Solórzano and Yosso, 2009). These five principles together formed the framework within which this study is contextually placed.

CHAPTER 3

BME Leadership in FE: themes and trends

3.1 Introduction

By April 2009, a range of government and local policies and positive action initiatives were in place with a series of published and unpublished research informing the debate of the progression and representation of senior BME leaders in the public and private sector. This review examines some of the key policy documents and initiatives up to that date which highlighted and aimed to tackle diversity, the under-representation of BME leaders and the link with the succession planning agenda in FE. It demonstrates the strategic importance that government departments have placed on succession planning management across all education sectors and will be useful to all FE stakeholders who have a remit to support, improve and develop the leadership of the sector.

This review consists of an analysis of sector policies and practices as well as an examination of some of the literature about leadership and diversity theory and practices which are relevant to the research questions. It identifies relevant themes and trends that have been found and offers a critical account of the literature. The primary focus is on documents and research related to the UK further education system but, where appropriate, some key policy initiatives and literature from other sectors and countries have been included.

The review recognises that despite the very recent gains and an emerging critical mass of BME staff in the sector, more work needs to be done to address their under-representation, particularly at senior and middle management levels. The primary purpose, therefore, is to set the context, identify key themes, describe and critically appraise policies and initiatives that have been put in place to address the issue and to highlight areas where additional research is needed.

The review is presented in five sections starting with this introduction, which presents the structure of the chapter. The second section contains an overview of the literature search and parameters. The third presents the themes that have been identified following the review of FE sector focused reports and studies relating to BME staff progression. Section four identifies key sector stakeholder organisations involved in supporting staff progression and sector succession management planning issues. It also refers to initiatives from other relevant public sectors and finds that there are clear similarities to the approaches taken to address the issue. The final section of the review provides a summary and conclusion to the policies, initiatives and documents examined and introduces possible avenues for further research.

3.2 The Literature Search

A range of sources were examined which includes learning and skills sector reports, studies relating to BME staff progression in FE and schools and college leadership and management journals and articles. The criteria for selecting the documentation for analysis were based on their potential to provide information that was of relevance to the research questions and to the methodology. The parameters covered areas including FE leadership and development studies, general sector and institutional policies on BME staff progression. Other documents reviewed included studies that reported on strategies and initiatives which addressed the issue of BME staff progression in other relevant sectors and statistical documentation reporting on the profile of the FE workforce. Where relevant, reference is made to other multiple discriminatory factors such as gender, age, cultural, religious differences on BME staff progression.

3.3 Succession Planning and the FE Sector Succession Crisis

Globally more organisations are experiencing difficulties in recruiting leaders. A number of factors are causing this shortage, including the speed of growth and change in business and policy approaches as well the dramatic rise in retirements. This is happening at a time when leaders are being seen as the key to organisational and business success. Succession planning can be broadly defined as;

"a process by which one or more successors are identified for key posts (or groups of similar key posts), and career moves and/or development activities are planned for these successors." (Improvement and Development Agency, I&DeA, 2009)⁹

Hargreaves & Fink (2006) see succession planning in the public sector as less strategic than in the private sector and regarded as more of a cost than an investment in the future. In the case of FE, the current leadership crisis is caused, some would argue, by a lack of succession planning and management strategies. (Barnett, Deane and Gittens, 2008).

A survey commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) found that 40 per cent of leaders and managers in FE colleges and in adult and community learning were aged 50 and more. Entitled *Tomorrow's Learning Leaders*, and based on the responses of nearly 2000 people from a variety of levels of management in these three areas, the report provided an insight into the attitudes and values of leaders and managers in post-compulsory learning, what they did, the qualifications they held and the skills they most needed to develop. As well as highlighting the then looming 'succession crisis' amongst the next generation of leaders and managers, as the leaders at that time neared retirement age, it also revealed inequalities of gender and ethnicity (Frearson, 2003).

Research undertaken for the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) by Collinson and Collinson (2005, 2006) highlighted the continuing challenge of recruiting senior leaders in the sector. Interviews with 140 employees (from principal to lecturer) in seven post-16 organisations revealed a general perception that the job of principal was highly challenging and increasingly stressful. Employees repeatedly emphasised the extensive nature of the role as a primary reason for the reduction in applications for principal vacancies.

⁹ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=5222299#contents-1> – [accessed 22/5/09]

3.4 FE Workforce Diversity Profile

The National Survey of Black Staff in Further Education (Maylor et al, 2002) established a base line of information regarding the leadership positions of BME staff in the LSS. These data also informed the research findings of the Commission for Black Staff in FE (CBSFE) report (2002) which found that in 2001/02, although seven per cent of all college staff were from a BME background, only three per cent were college managers with one per cent being principals. The 'National Survey' found that eight per cent of colleges reported advertising posts in the minority ethnic press and 11 per cent of colleges included BME representatives on interview panels as standard practice. It also found that 15 per cent of colleges set targets for the employment or progression of BME staff, 20 per cent set targets or objectives for minority ethnic representation on the Governing Body and five per cent set objectives for minority ethnic representation on key college committees such as academic boards.

Three years after CBSFE recommendations were published, Sir Andrew Foster in his 2005 review of the sector entitled *'Realising the Potential'* again reported that the context in which leadership of our colleges was operating included a lack of BME staff in leadership positions. Even though he acknowledged that some steps had been taken to address this at this time, he stated clearly that *'...more needs to be done'*.

In March 2006 the DfES published a White Paper on the reform of the further education system in England, *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* and on the same day indicated that a full 'race' equality impact assessment (REIA) would be published. The paper commented that;

"Too many minority groups continue to be under-represented, especially at senior levels, and face barriers to progression in the sector" (p54)

At the time of writing this thesis, the LLUK was responsible for staff data collection and this has now passed to the Learning & Skills Improvement Agency, the main quality improvement body for the LSS. The LLUK Staff data report (2009) provides an overview of the FE college workforce in

England and deals with the general profile of FE college staff, detailing aspects such as gender, age, ethnicity, geographical location and pay. It also provides an analysis of the level of teaching qualifications held by staff and subject areas taught. The analysis of the diversity profile (Annual Workforce Diversity profile) confirms the level of BME staff under-representation and lack of progression (LLUK, 2009a).

It indicates that in five of the nine regions of England there has been a decline in the percentage of managers from a BME background. Another staff data report published by the LLUK confirms that staff from BME backgrounds were less likely to be in senior management positions than those with white ethnic profiles (4.0 per cent compared to 1.8 per cent in 2007/08) (LLUK, 2009a). These findings which are analysed in depth later in the thesis demonstrate that initiatives to support BME staff progression are not necessarily having the expected impact on BME leader numbers.

Six years on from the CBSFE report and findings, research investigating BME professionals and the role they were playing in addressing the succession crisis was published by the CEL (Barnett, Deane and Gittens, 2008). CEL decided to revisit this topic to try and establish why the numbers of BME staff were not increasing at the pace that would have been expected with so many of the recommendations from the commission's report having been taken on board by the sector. Barnett, Deane and Gittens focused the key findings of this report on the issue of the lack of succession planning, recognising that most college leaders were not taking a serious and strategic approach to their succession management which led to uncoordinated measures that were potentially racially discriminatory practices.

3.5 BME Staff Recruitment and Selection

Inappropriate recruitment and selection practices and their impact on opportunities for progression were major themes of the CBSFE (2002) inquiry and report. At that time witnesses' concerns focused on the circumvention of established procedures, with BME staff experiencing racially biased

recruitment and selection practices, particularly at times of merger or restructuring or when seconding or redeploying staff. The report advised Colleges to adopt formal recruitment procedure for all posts and other recommendations suggested that positive action recruitment processes be put in place to actively promote applications from BME staff and governors.

Other concerns in the report included the undervaluing of relevant experience and of overseas or non-traditional qualifications. 'Tokenism', particularly on internal committees and interview panels and the 'glass ceiling' with its negative effect on progression and retention were identified. Further findings raised issues around the 'ghettoisation' of BME staff in certain subject areas and inconsistent or ineffective use of ethnic monitoring and data collection.

For the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the FE funding body at that time, the report made strong recommendations for the organisation to address the under-representation of BME people on its staff and to take systematic steps to ensure that its workforce represented the ethnic profile of the national population by 2009. With the machinery of government changes which saw the LSC disbanded and its role taken over by two new funding agencies in April 2010, further surveys will need to be carried out to establish how far the new organisations will maintain steps towards these recommendations. Other suggestions made to the LSC included them taking action to support the recruitment, selection and training of BME governors.

Based on these findings, the report made recommendations for key FE stakeholders who it was felt could have an impact in addressing these issues. Some of the recommendations which were given to the DfES suggested that the department make funding available to provide fast-track management training for suitably qualified minority ethnic staff and make full appropriate use of positive action in staff training and recruitment.

3.6 Positive Action Initiatives in the FE sector

3.6.1 Overview of positive action in FE

As discussed earlier, the concept of positive action is an approach to creating equal opportunity for all, imported in the 1970's by the United Kingdom (UK) and based on the United States (US) model of equality termed '*affirmative action*'. It thus refers to a range of measures and initiatives that FE could lawfully take to help staff from a range of under-represented groups compete for jobs on equal terms with other applicants. For example, where an education provider is experiencing a lack of representation of BME staff, it is lawful for it to provide a targeted training course for that particular group of the population. It is therefore a lawful strategy for tackling the under-representation of BME leaders and managers.

At the time of the CBSFE report (2002) the model was under-used by the sector, largely because of the general misunderstanding of what it actually meant in practice. Many in the sector do not realise that positive action is different to positive discrimination and forms no part of a selection process. One of the key recommendations put forward by the CBSFE report was the need for the sector to develop positive action models and it remains an important equalities device. Many of those colleges who have a large under-representation of BME staff at certain levels add an additional line to their staff vacancy advertisements stipulating that they welcome applicants from a BME background and this in theory is meant to encourage applicants from a BME background to apply.

In an unpublished small scale study undertaken as part of an action research project, which studied the perception of positive action courses from the perspective of staff in one large inner city college, evidence suggested that many college staff believed that positive action sought to remove competition for jobs (Deane, 2003). The study argued for the embedding of more transparent and regular communications regarding the purpose and objective of positive action programmes.

It concludes with the view that once the sector begins to understand and debate the strategies involved in a positive action approach, there can be clarification that these initiatives do not mean giving staff positions just because they are from a BME background. This should ensure that colleges, senior leaders and sector stakeholders will be better informed and more able to make objective decisions about using these approaches to address the leadership crisis.

3.6.2 Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2003

Leadership was a key component of the *Success for All*, the governments 2002 FE reform agenda. The Centre for Excellence in Leadership was set up as the leadership college with the aim of addressing the key leadership challenges faced by the FE sector. As well as having a remit of increasing leadership capacity and capability, these challenges also included increasing the diversity of sector leaders and widening the talent pool for succession planning and recruitment of the sector's future leaders. The Centre for Excellence started delivering pilot programmes in November 2003.

3.6.3 Black Leadership Initiative (BLI), 2003

The Black Leadership Initiative (BLI) was established in 2003 following the publication of the report of the CBSFE. It received initial funding from the LSC and more recently receives funding from the LSIS. The remit of the BLI was to introduce measures, through positive action programmes, that would improve the career development and leadership opportunities for BME staff and managers working in the FE sector. Programmes currently being delivered include one-term to one-year secondments into middle or senior management posts at a college, sector agency or related institution and work shadowing opportunities which give participants the opportunity to undertake a placement at a college, sector agency or related institution.

A 2004 evaluation of the programme, undertaken by the CEL evaluation team, found that all the respondents felt that the BLI had had a personal impact on them. A large number reported that it had boosted their confidence and some had learned to be more assertive:

"It helped me think through issues and find the best solutions and gave me support at a difficult time in my career. It provided a forum away from work to discuss and strategise around professional issues."(p43)

The impact of the BLI had, for many, raised their aspirations:

Originally I did not have major ambitions to become a Principal but I now realise what is needed to undertake such a role and pursue such a career. (p43)

3.6.4 The First Steps and Introduction to Leadership Programmes

LSIS has run two positive action programmes for BME staff in the sector. Both programmes aim to develop and increase the leadership capacity of BME staff and managers in the learning and skills sector by raising aspiration and confidence. The programmes recognise diversity, ethnicity and 'race' as assets and examine the contribution these elements make to a diverse learning environment.

The 'First Steps' programme ran from 2005 until 2010 and proved to be a success both in terms of addressing the issue of individual BME staff aspirations as well as acting as a key succession planning strategy. It is designed for BME teachers, trainers and administrative staff who have recently stepped into management roles. The 'Introduction to Leadership' programme is designed for those BME staff who are aspiring to first line management positions and was launched in 2008, after it was recognised that there were many potential leaders and experienced BME staff who had still not managed to make that first management step.

Both programmes were until 2010 supported by a 100 per cent fee subsidy from the Department of Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) now the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS). To qualify for the subsidy, participants must be Black or from any other visible ethnic minority group as defined by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) now the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), and employed by an organisation in receipt of funding from the LSC. One of the questions raised

in recent evaluations is whether participants would have enrolled on the course of their own volition and with their own funds if the subsidies had not been available. And indeed would the providers prioritise supporting BME staff financially, and allow them the time off to undertake these programmes? The answers to these questions may shortly become apparent as from September 2010 the subsidy is no longer.

Findings from the evaluations reviewed are presented and analysed later in this thesis, however limitations to the scale and scope of this research will not allow for assessing the impact of FE positive action programmes against tangible measurable outcomes that directly address the succession planning crisis. A key recommendation of this study is that longitudinal research needs to be undertaken to ascertain the progress and promotion of delegates who have completed the programmes in comparison to BME delegates who have undertaken other LSIS leadership courses.

3.7 A Review of Other Public Sector Initiatives

3.7.1 School Sector

Within primary and secondary school education, research dating back to the late 1980's revealed that minority ethnic staff have continually experienced exclusionary practices in the teaching profession and during their teacher education and training (Bariso 2001; Boulton and Coldron 1993; Brah 1991; Osler 1997;). Powney et al (2003) reported that there was a lower level of BME teachers participating in leadership roles with 52 per cent remaining as teachers compared with 29 per cent of white women and 35 per cent of white males. This may be partly because BME teachers are concentrated in Inner London and are not geographically mobile for family reasons. There was, however, evidence of hidden discrimination for teachers securing promotion. The research cites six responding heads who reported little evidence of discrimination but who identified barriers very similar to those reported in FE research, including marginalisation, indirect racist attitudes and the ghettoisation of BME staff into particular roles and positions – all compounded by a female glass ceiling which is particularly serious for BME women. Additional evidence which highlights the similar experience of staff in

FE is given by Harris et al (2003), who in a literature review examining the career progression of deputy heads noted the reliance on informal networks from which ethnic minorities were excluded. They also noted that BME teachers were less likely to be encouraged to apply for promotion.

Much like FE, these issues have been taken on board and the school sector continues to look for ways to address BME staff under-representation by undertaking research and developing initiatives and positive action programmes to support BME teacher progression into leadership such as the BME Leadership Foundation Programme and Investing in Diversity programmes run by the London Centre for Leadership in Learning. The position however is very much the same in that so far these initiatives appear to be having little impact on the speed of change.

3.7.2 Higher Education Sector

Concerns about the position and experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff in the UK higher education (HE) sector were highlighted by research conducted by Carter et al. in 1999, the same year that the Macpherson Inquiry (Macpherson, 1999) prompted questions across the public sector about 'institutional racism'. They pointed out that in that year just under seven per cent in UK HE Institutions were non-white and more than one in four minority academics reported they had personally experienced discrimination in job applications, with one in five having experienced racial harassment from other staff and students. BME staff also reported experiences of marginalisation and it was suggested that stereotyped assumptions were underpinned by racism and held by some white staff, which accounted for the marginalisation that some BME staff experienced in (Carter et al., 1999).

This confirmed the findings from earlier research which recognised that there was a tendency for minority ethnic academic staff to be stereotyped as less able (Heward et al. 1997). The position of BME women in HE at that time was of particular concern, with an appallingly low representation of BME women lecturers (Mirza, 1995).

Since then, the HE sector has witnessed the further development of institutional equity and diversity policies; a toolkit to build an anti-racist university (Turney et al., 2002); and the introduction of the 'race' equality duty in 2002. However, findings from an Association of Universities Teachers (AUT) survey (2005), found that BME academics still made up a tiny proportion of professors in UK universities. It further revealed that ethnic minorities are seriously under-represented in HE with some subjects registering no BME professors and less than a handful of senior staff. But the figures do come with a note of caution, as large numbers of academic staff chose not to declare their ethnicity. A study by Wright et al (2007) identifies the concept they term 'unwitting/apologetic racism' which is explained by one respondent;

"I wouldn't say I've experienced direct racism ... but it's the sort of indirect almost apologetic racism that one experiences, so you know that members of staff think that you are someone from the admin department or students might think that you're not really the lecturer, you might be another student or some other person who just wandered into the space, so that's the way it manifests itself. (Veronica, pseudonym, in Wright *et al.*, 2007: 151)

Other observations include the fact that;

".....BME staff report having fewer opportunities to develop research capacity and enhance their promotion prospects" (Wright et al., 2007) (p2).

A recent literature review published by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) has examined the position and experience of BME staff in HE (2009) and found that BME staff;

"....remain significantly underrepresented in more senior positions in both the academic and professional/support staff workforces, and report experiences of marginalisation." (Equality Challenge Unit, 2009) (p4).

In summary, it is clear that BME staff remain significantly under-represented in more senior positions in both the academic and professional/support staff workforces of the HE sector. We can conclude that this evidence suggests

that the issue of covert racism is one of the more prevalent aspects of racism acting as a barrier to BME progression in the HE sector.

3.7.3 National Health Service (NHS) Trusts

The NHS is the largest employer in the UK and employs the highest number of people from BME backgrounds - about 16 per cent of the NHS workforce. However, the distribution of the workforce in the NHS is concentrated mainly in the lower levels of the organisation, with 30 per cent of nurses and doctors coming from minority ethnic groups, less than ten per cent being senior managers and only one per cent of chief executives from BME groups (Healthcare Commission, 2009). As a result of recent initiatives to increase the representation of BME groups in senior positions, there has been a gradual growth in the number of non-executive directors and executive directors from minority ethnic groups. However, there are still wide disparities in their distribution, both geographically and within directorates.

NHS Trusts are committed to this work, and many have dedicated resources to assist BME managers and organisations in this task. One of the initiatives, '*Black Leadership in White Organisations*'¹⁰ has involved the development of a NHS sector-wide course for BME managers and senior staff. The success of this programme is yet to be evaluated, however the content of the course is primarily focused on changing organisational cultures and might be of interest to any development that FE may want to consider when looking at a future succession planning and BME staff progression strategy. These findings indicate that the NHS sector is experiencing the same issues with regards to BME staff progression into leadership roles and is undertaking similar positive action initiatives as those in FE. As is the case with the other examples of positive action initiatives, longitudinal research needs to be undertaken in order to ascertain the longer-term impact on actual BME leadership appointments.

¹⁰ <http://www.tavi-port.org/blackleadership> [accessed 14th April 2010]

3.7.4 The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)

The MPS has been in the spotlight over 'race' since the Macpherson report concluded that '*... institutional racism affects the MPS, and Police Services elsewhere*' (Macpherson, 1999 46.27). The MPS Race & Faith Inquiry (RFI) (2008)¹¹ reported that BME officers accounted for 8.3 per cent of the total staff, an increase of 3.4 per cent over the previous ten years. Of the total staff of police community support officers, almost one-third were from a BME background. However, there was still only one BME borough commander out of the 32 in London. No BME officer had been promoted to chief inspector level in the previous three years, while in the five years prior to that only one BME officer was promoted to the rank of commander or above. The inquiry reported that considerable research into the drivers and barriers to recruitment, progression and retention had been undertaken and the MPS had developed positive action initiatives aimed at developing the brightest and best BME staff and officers to reach their full potential.

3.7.5 Summary of Other Public Sector Positive Action Initiatives

This review of initiatives from public sectors organisations outside FE and discussed below identified very similar findings in terms of the issues they were experiencing with BME succession planning. There were clear similarities to the approaches being taken with very similar responses at both individual and organisational level. Programmes to support BME staff progression into leadership positions included networking, mentoring, coaching initiatives and a range of positive action programmes which similarly appear to have had a positive effect on the individuals concerned, but limited effect on the numbers of staff progressing.

3.8 BME Staff Identity

Implicit in any discussion of BME leadership and progression is the concept of identity and the discourse around assimilation or cultural pluralism theories (Mullard, 1982). The foundation of assimilation theory is based on the consideration that BME communities and individuals go through a process of

¹¹ <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/scrutinies/race-faith/emerging/findings/> [accessed 23/4/09]

social disorganization, adjustment, and eventual Westernisation as traditional ethnic, family, and kinship ties to their country of origin dissolves. The concept assumes that the minority groups will change completely in order to assimilate (Alba & Nee, 2003). Cultural pluralism is an alternative theory of identity which considers the notion that smaller groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities, and their values and practices are accepted by the wider culture. Bush et al (2006) argue that for many BME staff, a sense of identity can greatly influence how they view their attitudes to leadership and they consider two aspects to this argument - the historical, in terms of the 'roots' of the individual, and the geographical, in terms of the concentration of people of similar BME groups within an area. Bush et al cite Rassool (1999), who examined student perceptions of their own ethnicity. Rassool found that those who had recently arrived from the former colonies had been affected by 'discontinuity, differences and social displacement' resulting in a feeling of;

“.....‘in-betweenness’ with the potential for conflict, contradiction and ambiguity that had to be resolved before undertaking their careers. Identity is then affected by the sense and perception of community, racism, culture and belonging, which are strengthened where geographical concentration occurs” (Bush et al, 2006, p293)

These findings can be interpreted to reflect the experiences of some BME professionals in terms of their personal perceptions of being a leader and decisions about where they geographically wish to take up leadership roles.

An examination of '*development theory*' can also add to an understanding of BME staff identity and their self identification as leaders. Developmental theorists recognise the process that some BME individuals pass through in terms of the different stages in their lives which impact on how they view their own readiness to take on leadership roles. Most identity development theories are based on the research of Erik Erikson (1980) whose work first described the now familiar concepts of '*identity crisis*' and '*life cycle*'. Erikson provided an unprecedented framework for considering the development of individuals within society, culture and their work environments.

It is important to understand the culturally constructed nature of leadership environments in FE and to develop an awareness of the effect of the racially and ethnically defined development of self and leadership capabilities that are held by BME professionals. Difficulties arise for many BME professionals when they attempt to negotiate leadership environments that have been constructed within a cultural base of values, behaviours, beliefs, and ways of doing things that is different from their own. Unfortunately, these cultural manifestations in the leadership environment are usually unconsciously applied by senior leaders, making them difficult to identify, examine, and modify. The issues introduced here suggest that there is a need for research that recognises the complexity of issues of identity and BME leadership issues.

3.9 A BME Leadership and Management Style

Since the emergence of a white, middle class and female cohort of managers in the late 1960's, there has been an abundance of research and literature published which examines feminist leadership approaches and communication styles. Management and leadership behaviours have been studied in several countries to identify similarities and differences between men and women leaders (e.g. Morley, 1993; Oshagbemi and Gill 2003; Eagly, 2001, 1990; Oakley, 2000; Blackmore, 1999;). Whilst there has been this accepted academic discourse, the search for literature and documentation examining the issue of leadership and race in organisations has not been researched until very recently. More studies have now begun to emerge which are examining the issue of leadership and 'race' and there is a recent growth in the body of literature that is exploring the concept of ethnic and racial diversity in leadership (Shah 2006; Mirza 2004; Blackmore, 2010).

Discussions around leadership and 'race' can be illuminated by the work of a number of studies undertaken by American authors who have brought attention to the concept of organisational communications and what they see

as *race-neutral* theorising (Ashcraft & Allen, 2003; Parker 2001; 2005; Taylor and Trujillo 2001). This view reflects particular historical and social constructs of 'race' that perpetuate systems of domination based on notions of inferiority and superiority. The race-neutral concept can be examined in any organisational context including around the issue of leadership and is noticeable through FE leadership structures. I would argue that the sector leadership structure is embedded in a 'race-neutral', Eurocentric and patriarchal view of what leadership should look like. Nkomo (1992) recognises that in societies such as the UK and the US the dominant group members (white, heterosexual, middle class males) are;

“....taken to be [in the] highest category “the best” and all other groups must be defined and judged solely with reference to that hegemonic category.....Other racial and ethnic groups are relegated to sub-categories; their experiences are seen as outside of the mainstream of developing knowledge of organisations (Nkomo, 1992 p489)

The vast majority of researchers have not raised issues that highlight the impact of 'race-neutral' approaches to studies of leadership. Indeed, race-neutralising theory has not only influenced studies relating to leadership styles, but has also influenced who gets researched, the kind of questions that get asked and how leadership processes are conceptualised. As Nkomo (1992) has recognised, the issue with this dominant research paradigm is that there is little awareness of the contribution that BME groups can make to the study of leadership, culture and education and the impact on the management and leadership in the FE sector in the UK.

Deane (2003) suggests that one of the reasons why BME professionals do not 'fit' as leaders is due to the lack of recognition that BME staff approach leadership in a less traditional way, thus not demonstrating the perceived leadership attributes that are required for the sector. It is, therefore, not surprising that strategies and styles adopted by BME leaders are too often interpreted as being different to those which organisations expect of typical leaders. In order to reach the point of working with a leadership framework that recognises the requirements of the 21st century and global approaches

for a truly inclusive FE sector, I would argue that we need to move away from 'race-neutral' theorising in the study, practice and development of leadership.

McDaniel and Palassana (1978) presented an analysis of Black leadership from a theoretical, historical and empirical perspective and as part of this analysis the authors deduced a situational-interactional framework which demonstrated the need for further research to be undertaken into the existence and influence of BME leadership styles. This part of the literature review also demonstrates the need for further research into the examination of BME leadership styles particularly in the context of whether this concept might unwittingly influence leadership selection decisions in FE.

3.2.4 The Leadership fit - assimilation versus pluralism

The assimilation versus pluralism theory of 'race' focuses on the concept of why minority groups do not become assimilated or incorporated into mainstream society. The assimilation view often leads to a 'blame the victim' mentality amongst the dominant groups and in contrast pluralism allows for groups to remain distinct in terms of their cultural identity (Alba & Nee, 2003). There is a dilemma here in that both assimilists and pluralists can, depending on the situation, be seen as being interpreted as the 'superior' majority culture to which other groups are '*juxtaposed*' (Nkomo, 1992 p497). The findings from this study will demonstrate that many BME staff believed that in order for them to get on, they had to assimilate.

3.10 Attrition Rates, Retention and Future Employment

The term '*attrition*' is used to describe the measure of how many employees leave over a certain period of time. Monitoring an organisations attrition rate can be used as an indication of employee satisfaction. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that there is a higher rate of attrition of BME college managers from FE than their white counterparts (Network for Black Professionals (NBP) (2005b). The NBP research explored experiences of a small sample of BME managers who had left FE colleges between 2002, the year of publication of the CBSFE, and the year 2004. It found that " ... a high

proportion of these managers left the college sector for reasons relating to their ethnicity” and that “Racial discrimination either manifested in direct conflict or in terms of a glass ceiling was the major reason most of those questioned chose to leave the sector.” (NBP, 2005b).

When examining the issue of the retention of female managers in Higher Education (HE) institutions Morley (1999b) identified that *‘the struggle continues after access has been achieved’* (p150). This statement highlights the need to conduct research to further understand the manner in which some BME staff leaves the sector after gaining access to particular leadership positions. Evidence in the NBP research suggests that some are ground down by the additional pressures they experience as aspiring BME leaders.

The CBSFE (2002) report indicated that over half of all respondents expected to change job within five years. Black Caribbean women were the least likely to be able to foresee such a change. Black African Caribbean men reported that they would change jobs within the next five years with 95 per cent indicating that they would change employer. The most common reasons reported for this are lack of staff development and promotion opportunities. There are similar findings in the schools sector (Maylor et al, 2006). A number of instances were highlighted where *‘after successfully covering a senior position it was then allocated to another teacher’* (p25).

Further research in this area is needed with a larger and more randomly selected sample to ascertain whether BME managers leave the sector due to racial discrimination and to consider whether or not BME managers are leaving FE at a higher rate than their white counterparts.

3.11 Intersectionality – Multi-discriminatory factors for BME staff in FE

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) originally rearticulated concerns about Black female marginality in mainstream theorising which was expressed in studies by African American black

feminists such as Angela Davis, Patricia Hill Collins and Audre Lorde (Prins, 2006). Some authors (Crenshaw, 1989; Mirza, 2004; 2009) argue that studying these 'intersections' allow for a more dynamic understanding of 'race' and 'race' issues. While the term has been closely associated with the examination of the oppression of women within society, in the context of this study, it allows for an understanding and examination of the significance of the multiple identities of BME staff. The term is adopted as a concept to examine hierarchies of social position and identities (Butler 1990) of BME staff who are simultaneously positioned in multiple structures of dominance and power in FE sector organisations.

3.11.1 Gender

Recent research published by the Government Equality Office (2008) on BME gender-related factors in leadership concluded that;

“Ethnic minority women are under-represented in positions of power and senior decision making authorities across politics and the public, private and voluntary sectors” (p1)

Evidence demonstrated a number of key information including the fact that there are only two BME women MPs, there has never been an Asian woman MP, one per cent of councillors are BME women, there is only one BME woman in the senior judiciary and of the 961 Directors of FTSE 100 companies, only eight are women of non-European descent. The report acknowledges that reasons for this under-representation are not well understood beyond generalisations about all women or all people from BME backgrounds. It also recognises that the experiences and insights of those BME women who have managed to negotiate their way to the top are rarely heard. Campayne and Jantuah (2007) have started the process of filling the gap in developing an understanding of the specific experiences, needs, competencies and contributions of BME women leaders.

Deane et al (2007), identified the 'double bind' that BME women leaders in the FE sector face in terms of the multiple discrimination factors that act as barriers to their progression, however all of these studies conclude by

identifying that there is a need for further research to be undertaken in this area.

3.11.2 Disabilities

No research could be located regarding the progression of BME staff with disabilities in FE. There are very few studies examining the experience of BME disabled people generally and those found were mainly limited to regional and community level reporting rather than national reviews. The reports accessed as part of the documentary analysis included '*Count us in*' published by the City Parochial Foundation (2006) which recognised that;

"..... very often, disability is not a priority issue for organisations tackling the wider needs of BME people: at the same time, issues of disadvantage as a result of race are not priorities for disability organisations." (p3)

'Ethnicity, disability and work' (Ali et al, 2006), a report based on a three year study into BME people with sensory disabilities and employment, found that they are worse off than other people with disabilities and that disability organisations are failing to acknowledge this racial disadvantage. A further report by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) (2008), examined the position of disabled people in FE. '*From compliance to culture change*', makes no mention of BME staff but again does acknowledge that;

"There has been a systemic failure in public policy to address the needs and requirements of disabled staff throughout the lifelong learning sector to the extent that there is widespread institutional discrimination" (p.17)

The parameters and limited resources available for this thesis made it impossible to include this aspect in the collection and analysis of primary data. It is clear however that given these findings, further research to explore this issue is needed.

3.11.3 Sexual orientation

A tendency towards non-declaration reduces the ability to explore this issue, however research commissioned by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) reports on the problems faced by Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) staff in FE (Barnett, Deane & Gittens, 2006). The report acknowledges the challenges with obtaining responses from BME staff and indicates this in their findings;

“....., the researchers interviewed only one BME LGB member of college staff. It is, therefore, not possible to draw robust conclusions about any particular needs that BME LGB staff might have.” (p57)

3.11.4 Age

Although figures are available from the LLUK workforce data (2009a) which can indicate the age range of BME staff in the sector, there is no analysis available in terms of the impact of age on their leadership progression. General findings around age and employment such as those reported in *‘Tackling age discrimination in the workplace’* (CIPD, 2006) state that;

“Age discrimination remains a significant problem in the workplace. Fifty-nine per cent of respondents report that they have been disadvantaged by age discrimination at work.” (p3)

We can conclude therefore that age discrimination is clearly a significant problem in employment and given the multi-discriminatory factor of ‘race’, which has already been demonstrated with other factors discussed, further research is needed in this area.

3.12 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the some of the most relevant sector policies and practices as relevant to the research questions and identifies the key themes and trends. The review concludes that FE and other public sectors have recognised that in order to meet the challenge of recruiting and retaining BME staff in senior positions, the needs of BME staff in managerial and leadership positions require much more focus and attention. The factors which prevent BME staff from making a positive contribution to their organisation, developing their potential as leaders and allowing them to bring value to an organisation need to be understood and addressed. The review has revealed concerns about the under representation of BME staff at more senior levels in FE as well as in other public sector organisations and has noted the failure of positive action strategies to increase the representation of BME leaders in all sectors. It suggests that interventions are needed to change organisational culture so that FE can be more accepting and embracing of difference in leadership styles.

Finally, the review has revealed an absence of longitudinal research that is needed to identify the effectiveness in statistical terms of the initiatives and strategies that have taken place. It highlights the need for research that examines the concept of a BME leadership style and recognises that further theoretical understanding is needed to fully inform any debate about BME leaders and leadership in the UK.

The review has begun to present a picture of the reasons why the under-representation of BME leaders in the sector still exists and presents an overview of the initiatives that have been undertaken to address this concern. This study aims to contribute to the advancement of this field of enquiry through providing an up-to-date assessment of the current state of play in the FE sector and using the concept of CRT as a tool for interrogating the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The FE Sector has made considerable strides in working with learners from diverse backgrounds. It has a good track record of tackling inequality for learners and an inspection framework that places an emphasis on improving equality and diversity. For Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff in the sector, however, the picture is very different. In October 2002, the Commission for Black Staff report, *Further Education Leading the Way*, identified institutional racism as a factor negatively impacting on the career progression of BME staff. The report identified the institutional barriers to BME progression and it is this document that is used here as a point of reference and benchmark for assessing current initiatives and the sector position now.

The documentary analysis of sector policies and strategies undertaken for this study has demonstrated that initiatives addressing many of the recommendations made by the report have resulted in very little progress being made in terms of increasing the number of BME staff in senior positions.

4.2 The Purpose of the Research

The primary aim of this research is to find evidence that identifies why the under-representation of BME leaders in the sector still exists, despite initiatives to address the concern. To maintain the momentum behind the sector commitment to change this status quo, research and studies about this issue will support the important objective of keeping the subject of BME representation in the Learning and Skills Sector (LSS) on the leadership progression and succession planning agenda. In order to support and hasten a much needed change to the lack of BME representation at leadership level, this study acknowledges the need to continually look for

different ways in which to address this issue. It aims to raise awareness of the need to periodically examine the institutional and sector practices that have a positive or negative impact on the progression of this particular group of professionals.

Other reasons for undertaking this research are based on the need to establish a new paradigm for the study of leadership and diversity. Despite the sector having invested heavily in initiatives to address the lack of BME staff advancement, the impact of these initiatives on increasing the number of BME leaders is minimal. Recent research such as that published in 2008 by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL), now the Learning and Skills Improvement Agency (LSIS), has shown that FE is still facing a leadership succession crisis as initially identified in a 2002 Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) report. This research identifies the need to approach current initiatives from a different standpoint and theoretical framework of racism and the theory of 'race'.

With FE employing an increasing number of experienced professionals from a BME background, it is also important to ensure that the views and voices of this untapped pool of talent are heard and documented.

4.3 Research Framework

4.3.1 Introduction

This is an empirical research project and I have approached the research as a sector case study and an empirical inquiry investigating the issues of 'race', discrimination and barriers to progression within the real-life context of being a BME professional in FE. The literature review has highlighted the need for a wider discourse about theories of 'race' and the racial discriminatory factors that impact on leadership and management issues in the Learning and Skills Sector. These factors continue to act as barriers to BME staff progression and it was important to me that I found and established a relevant and appropriate framework to recognise these issues and to shape my research. I looked to frameworks that represented diversity in the research academy

and to those which looked to undertake narrative and life history investigations as a methodology. It was also necessary to adopt a framework that took into consideration the issues of 'race' and discrimination and the associated barriers to progression within the leadership and management agenda. As such, a number of frameworks were considered including biographical and feminist research approaches before I chose the CRT approach.

4.4 Research Approach

As indicated earlier, the CRT framework which I have engaged in this study is complemented by qualitative research approaches including narrative and life history research methodologies. Life history is increasingly becoming a recognised qualitative research strategy and by focusing on the case study of individuals, it allows for participants to have their own voice and takes into account the societal and work context in which they are situated. In the context of this study the different histories and experiences of barriers to progression that BME staff go through, means they are in the strongest position to communicate these experiences. Reissman (cited in Bathmaker, 2010, p3) notes that one important feature of narrative and life history is that;

“.....it provides ways of getting closer to the experience of those whose lives go unheard, unseen, undocumented” (p3)

Bathmaker (2010) recognises the impact that the approach can have on creating social change and acknowledges that;

“...possibilities for social change need, at least in part, to be understood and conceived of through the small everyday acts of individuals, and the histories that have brought them to their present place” (p5)

By choosing this research approach I have taken a decision to encourage BME staff to share and recount their stories as well as take the opportunity to create their own constructs and interpretations around their life histories.

4.5 Research Methods

A systematic review and mixed methods approach has been taken. Four interconnected research components frame the study - a review of relevant FE and public sector quantitative data and policy papers, an analysis of pre-collected data from an earlier piece of research I was involved in and the conducting of focus groups and the undertaking of one-to-one interviews.

4.6 Secondary Research

4.6.1 Quantitative Data Collection – FE workforce data

I first collected statistical data sourced from staff individual record indicators which provided the quantitative data needed to establish the current position of BME staff roles and management levels in the sector. The quantitative information, though useful to establish measurable indicators of the current situation and the trends of BME staff progression in FE, is limited in terms of analysing and interpreting explanatory factors and complexities of interaction and the figures on their own did not allow me to examine causal relationships. There was therefore a need to conduct primary research through qualitative methods to probe more deeply into statistical findings.

4.6.2 Pre-collected Data – “*Succession Planning and Racial Equality in the Further Education System*” (2008)

An analysis of data collected during an earlier study and reported on in *Succession Planning and Racial Equality in the Further Education System* (Barnett, Deane and Gittens, 2008), formed the second method of data collection. This research was undertaken on behalf of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) who decided to revisit the topic and identify how far the position of BME staff had changed in the six years since the Commission for Black Staff in FE (CBSFE). The report focused on the impact the lack of BME representation at leadership levels was having on the succession planning crisis in LSS colleges and providers and it attempted to provide ‘a significant contribution to explaining why and how it has never been more important for our sector to take systematic, consistent action for race equality’ (Executive Summary, 2008, p5).

The data from this research included responses from questionnaires completed by a range of participants working in colleges and providers in England and it was these data that were analysed for the purpose of my thesis and the research conducted in 2009. Because the respondents were anonymous I was able to use this information directly without having to inform them of the fact that I was using some of the findings from that exercise to inform this new study.

4.6.2.1 Role of Research Associates for 2008 research

As a member of the three research associates who undertook this earlier study, I had access to a combination of data actually used in the report as well as secondary data that was never used. This included all of the raw data that was collected.

My role in the 2008 research included:

- The design of the research approach and methodology
- Data collection involving literature search and review
- Conducting one-to-one interviews with a range of staff including BME staff, Human Resources Directors, Senior Managers, Principals and Chief Executives of providers and key LSS quangos and government agencies
- Conducting focus groups with BME staff

The other members of the team were involved in the design of the research approach and methodology and in conducting some of the one-to-one interviews. One associate took the lead with coordinating the writing up of the final report with one taking the main role of managing the data analysis software.

All parties involved in the completion and commissioning of this report were informed and gave permission for information collected to be used for the purpose of this thesis. (Appendix 1 and 2)

In terms of my professional practice as an independent leadership consultant, trainer and policy adviser in FE, interpreting and analysing this

information further provided me with the opportunity to advance and develop aspects of my professional role. Revisiting and analysing the data from another research angle extended my understanding of the experiences of BME professionals and their perceptions of the structural and institutional barriers that inhibit their leadership progression. Using the data allowed for the cross-referencing of points discussed in the findings of the 2008 report and of course most crucially it allowed for more time to be spent conducting the field work.

I chose to use these existing data largely because the group of staff that I intended to research for this study were the same cohort and body of professionals we had questioned for the 2008 report. It was always noted that we had elicited information from the respondents to the earlier research that was not used in the final 2008 report. Much of this unused information addressed key aspects of the research questions put together for this thesis and, therefore, usefully informed the research findings.

4.7 Primary Research

4.7.1 Documentary Analysis – a Systematic Qualitative Review Approach

The methodology adopted incorporated two approaches to documentary analyses and literature reviews. The first approach consisted of a critical systematic review in which I utilised my professional knowledge and practice to identify the scope of the documentation to be reviewed. There is increasing recognition amongst more innovative researchers that as a method of collecting evidence-based data, systematic review has developed as a specific methodology for searching for, appraising and synthesising findings of primary and secondary studies (Dixon-Wood, 2006). Traditionally associated with medical and health care research, there has been a recent increase in its interest as a method of presenting cumulative data about the effects of educational policies and practices (Evans and Benefield, 2001). The reason I took this approach was in order to locate earlier studies, to see where effective research methodologies had been developed and to see how the topic of BME progression and leadership had been tackled previously. I

also wanted to build on previous research and place my study in the context of other work already undertaken in this field. Mulrow and colleagues (1997) recognised that the concept of reviews was not new, noting that the preparation of reviews has traditionally depended on implicit, idiosyncratic methods of data collection and interpretation. As a method of evidence-based data collection, systematic reviews have specific characteristics. They include addressing a focused research question, being clear about the search criteria and determining the relevance of studies included in the review. The advantages of using this approach to the study allowed me to use my knowledge of the subject area to highlight the key themes to be covered as well as to assess where the documentary evidence could be searched. Through this process I was able to identify the literature gaps that existed in BME leadership and progression discourse in FE. The disadvantage of using this method is the counter-view that despite this being my specialist area of professional and academic practice it is a challenge to incorporate all types of evidence that might be relevant to the research. Other disadvantages to this approach recognise that these types of reviews usually ignore unpublished research, which in turn, introduces a publication bias (Glass, McGaw & Smith, 1981). In order to avoid these pitfalls, I included some unpublished works in the review.

The second approach that I adopted for the review was that of a systematic qualitative review. This approach involved purposively sampling the literature relevant to the research questions, and I paid particular attention to studies that challenged other findings that represented BME views. The method was systematic and transparent, and particularly suited to the CRT approach taken to my research.

A wide range of documents (113 in total) were examined, including documentation relating to both private and public sector BME leadership and progression issues as well as some relevant international studies.

4.7.2 Qualitative Research Methods: Focus groups and individual interviews

The primary data for the research were collected in November 2008 and May 2009 through the conducting of focus groups and individual interviews and this allowed me to obtain further insights into the participants' experiences around barriers to progression. It provided additional data for answering my research questions and, together with the secondary research activities, I was able to probe into other aspects of findings that had not been investigated in the earlier 2008 research.

I judged that the use of individual interviews and focus groups were the most appropriate methods for acquiring the participants' personal accounts, experiences and career life histories. I was guided by Dyke and Gunaratnam (2000) who examined the ethnic monitoring approaches in Higher Education that utilised quantitative and qualitative methods. They recognised that qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, are particularly useful for capturing '*...some of the effects of racism and wider structural inequalities ...which are not amenable to quantitative measurement*' (p326).

Many researchers in the field of 'race' and ethnicity have now turned to qualitative techniques. However, critics argue that qualitative studies may have serious methodological weaknesses and Connolly argues that some studies '*may be biased and influenced by the perspective of the researcher*' (1992).

This is indeed a strong argument asserting that the perspectives and experiences of those involved can influence research theories based on qualitative methods. Much of the qualitative aspect of this research draws on reflexivity as an approach and Hardy et al (2001) recognise that;

"Reflexivity involves reflecting on the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcomes" (p533)

It is the lack of reflexivity that has been equated with researcher bias and by adopting this approach from the outset, I critically examined my own research practice constantly whilst exploring, examining and analysing my involvement. Ahern (1999) suggests that some subjective awareness is useful and points out that it is not possible for researchers to alleviate any bias if they are not aware of it. Using the reflexive bracketing model (Ahern, 1999), I was able to consider and report on how my choice of research methods, analysis and interpretation of findings could be influenced by my own views and values.

4.7.3 Research Sample

The first stage of the sampling process involved the establishment of a clear definition of the population being studied. Whilst recognising this ongoing debate on definitions, it is hoped that the meaning of BME staff as discussed in chapter one will address any concerns which may exist around the terminology chosen for the population of this study.

The sampling frame for the interviews and focus groups, which I established as being representative of the population, included a purposive sample of BME associates including acquaintances and colleagues contacted through a list of FE providers and stakeholder networks and through the personal networks I had established in the course of my professional practice. Invitations were sent via email and I asked the initial link persons to forward these on to any other colleagues who might be interested in participating in the research (see Appendix 3).

The issue of sample bias was considered and steps were taken to limit this occurrence. Sample bias generally exists when this type of non-random data is chosen for statistical purposes and I reflected on this concept because the sample of BME participants for the primary research focus groups and individual interviews was generally chosen through contacts with established networks and BME support groups. The areas of possible bias I considered included monitoring the responses received from the BME staff as it was possible that some of these participants had joined particular networks and

support groups because they had experienced issues at work which may have led to them looking for support. I needed to be aware that some BME staff taking part in the focus groups and one-to-one interviews were likely to have pre-judged and strong opinions about the issue.

To counter this, and to address the need to establish a set of objective and comprehensive viewpoints that were representative of the FE sector as a whole, I also undertook one-to-one interviews with white respondents who were chosen from a systematic random sample of principals and other senior managers. These white managers were initially included in a purposive sample list of managers from a range of FE providers, at different management levels and from different ethnic backgrounds. A breakdown of these interviewees by gender, ethnicity and management tier is shown in Table 1, Appendix 4. Table 2 gives their profiles which includes an anonymous identification code and a brief biography of each.

The sampling method adopted demonstrates the intention to obtain a diverse range of views and perspectives in relation to the rationale and purpose of the study which was primarily to objectively identify why the under-representation of BME leaders in FE still exists. It also reflects the limitations to the scope of the study including time and cost restraints.

4.7.4 Focus Groups

In order to complement the secondary data analysed, I conducted five focus groups. I chose this third component to the research design partly in order to complement the secondary data by supporting triangulation and validating the reliability of the information gathered from the focus groups undertaken in the 2008 research. As Cohen et al (2003) observe, "*Focus groups might be useful to triangulate with more traditional forms of interviewing, questionnaires, observation etc.*" (p288). Secondly, the focus group inquiries specifically addressed the research questions of my thesis and study which focused much more on internal institutional practices rather than on the sector wide issue of succession planning.

There are many definitions of a focus group in the literature, but features like *'organised discussion'* (Kitzinger 1994), *'collective testimony'* (Denzin & Lincoln 2003), *'social events'* (Goss & Leinbach 1996) and *'interaction'* (Kitzinger 1995) all characterise the way in which the focus groups were conducted and identify the contribution that focus groups make to education and social research. Powell and Single (1996) define a focus group as a *'group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research'* (p499).

Conducting focus groups is a methodological approach that I recognised was particularly appropriate for the context of this study, and though they are a form of group interviewing, it was important to distinguish between the two. Group interviewing involves interviewing a number of people at the same time, the emphasis being on questions and responses between the researcher and participants. Focus groups however rely on the interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher. (Morgan, 1997, p12). The key characteristic which distinguished the focus groups held for this research was the insight and data produced by the interaction between the BME professionals who attended. I purposefully chose this approach to my study to draw on their attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way which would not be feasible using other methods. As Cohen et al state (2003);

"It is with the interaction of the group that the data emerge" (p228)

For BME professionals in particular, I was aware that their attitudes, feelings and beliefs were more likely to be revealed during the social gathering and the interaction which being in the focus group entailed. Previous research experiences have demonstrated to me that BME participants benefit from the process and they appreciate the opportunity to articulate their experiences and ideas in a group with other colleagues who share the same experiences as their own. I agree with the view of Johnson (1996) who asserts that focus groups have the potential to raise consciousness and empower participants.

It is clear that not everyone will experience these benefits, as focus groups can also be intimidating at times, especially for inarticulate or shy members.

4.7.5 The One-to-One Interviews

Interviewing was chosen as the most appropriate method to ascertain the perception and personal experiences of FE leaders, managers, college principals and governors who play an important part of the BME staff experience career opportunities in the sector. One-to-one interviews were particularly useful for obtaining information relating to participants' first hand observations, interpretations and understanding of the issue. Holding this type of interview allowed me to probe further and as a now experienced researcher in the area of ethnicity, I am aware of how probing to elicit sometimes sensitive information has to be approached in order to gain the confidence and trust of those being interviewed and who might initially see me as being biased due to my own ethnicity.

Eight individual one-to-one interviews were held with four taking place by telephone. This latter approach was the most relevant way to gather some of the information due to the limitations of resources available and because it enabled me to gather the information rapidly. A semi-structured framework was adopted for the interviews with questions devised to cover the research enquiry directly and approaches implemented to allow the participants to give personal accounts and career histories as part of their responses (see Appendix 5).

Piloting was carried out via a series of mock interviews with other BME and white colleagues to test the interview framework and support the development of more effective questions. This process also gave me the opportunity to practise my interviewing skills in an area that I recognised had the potential to be emotionally difficult and sensitive for some participants. Some questions were modified in light of this experience and were made more explicit and directly related to the research questions. This avoided any misunderstandings of what was being asked, elaboration and prompting was linked directly to the purpose of the enquiry and there was less opportunity to

divert from the facts and to enter into emotive discussions around the wider equality and diversity issues. A few logistical problems occurred whilst arranging to meet with those who had agreed to be interviewed. These included problems with fitting in the time, postponed interviews and difficulties encountered around arranging meeting locations.

For these reasons four interviews were conducted by telephone. Like the face-to-face interviews, they allowed for some personal contact with the respondents which I viewed as an important aspect of the research. I was aware however of the limitations, particularly in terms of the participants taking time out to speak to me. I had initial conversations with all interviewees prior to the actual interview to arrange specific telephone interview times. There were no obvious problems or differences noted whilst conducting the telephone interviews, although they were shorter in comparison to the face-to-face interviews and generally more focused and to the point. In that sense it is likely that some additionality may have been lost such as the opportunity to gather extra views and information from participants who would have been more likely to 'open up' in a face-to-face situation, which was a feature of the interviews that were held in person.

Figure 3 below gives a summary of those who participated in the one-to-one interviews by gender, ethnicity and management tier. The tables in appendix three provides a more detailed breakdown of the profile of interviewees. This demonstrates that a range of staff were interviewed which supported the triangulation of the analysis from the secondary research activities.

Figure 3: Summary of participant profiles: one-to-one interviews

GENDER		ETHNICITY		LEVEL			
F	M	BME	White	Senior Tier 1 & 2	Middle Tier 3	MGL Tier 4	Senior FE CEO Stakeholder
6	2	4	4	5	1	0	2
TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL			
8		8		8			

4.8 Research Tools

I designed the research tools in the form of a standard focus group and interview response template which I used to note participant answers (see Appendix 5). Both closed and open questions were asked and scope was made available for further probing where this was required. Qualitative responses to open questions were noted verbatim. The interview responses were recorded and transcribed. One of the key factors in conducting the focus group was the issue of confidentiality and this was guaranteed from the outset.

4.9 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability can be enhanced in a number of different ways and for the research methods I adopted, I looked to ways of maximising the diversity of the response rate by designing the instruments in a manner that would augment their validity and spending time ensuring that the triangulation of data methods was rigorous. Biographical research methods have become more accepted; however there are still issues around qualitative researcher bias and in order to address these criticisms, I adopted a range of strategies to ensure that the reliability of the process was maintained. I recognised that by adopting a CRT framework, I was challenging researcher views and approaches that argue for total neutrality. Cohen and Manion (1994) recognise that the main source for invalidity of data is researcher bias;

“The sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the substantive content of the questions” (p282)

Robson (2002) identified that prolonged involvement can lead to greater ‘researcher bias’ (p174) and in order to identify areas of potential researcher bias and in seeking to acknowledge the complexities and multiple ethical considerations I was faced with, I adopted a reflective approach to my study. Many researchers report that they have attempted to achieve this without demonstrating a model or approach of how they go about doing it.

I used a reflexivity framework put forward by Ahern (1999) as a guide to support this process. The model is based on the use of reflexivity to identify potential bias and to 'bracket' issues so their influence on the research process is minimised. Through using the Ahern (1999) model I acknowledged that there was a possibility that I may find it difficult at times to maintain my objectivity, due to the fact that I could personally identify with much of the experiences of the group being studied.

This model is particularly useful for this study as it recognises that total objectivity is not achievable or in some cases not desirable in qualitative research, however it allows and expects the researcher to acknowledge and put aside bias and assumptions. Using Ahern's model helped me ensure that within the parameters of this level of bias, the process of collecting the data and analysing and interpreting the findings was as impartial and objective as possible.

Adopting a CRT framework and approach to the study complements Ahern's model given the value it places on the experiential knowledge of BME people and its approach of challenging the notion that researchers can be unbiased.

Ethical issues relating to my role as a Black researcher with an invested interest in the progression of BME staff, as well as the political and professional stake I had placed in completing this study are supported by the fact that CRT allows for challenging the idea that any single position can be unbiased or neutral. CRT posits that black researchers have an advantage when conducting and interpreting research that focuses on the experiences of other BME people. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Together with the reflexivity approach I adopted, CRT allowed me to immerse myself in the research with the assurance that any acknowledged and stated bias or partiality is allowed for.

4.10 Ethical Issues

4.10.1 Ethical Stance

Ethically, a crucial part of this investigation was acknowledging and adopting the stance of being a Black researcher and an LSS professional working directly in the sector with an experiential knowledge of BME staff and people. Another ethical stance I adopted was based on feminist approaches which identified the positive aspects of the notion of friendship and rapport in the interview process (e.g. Birch and Miller, 2000). I found that using this concept during the focus group and with the interviews held with BME colleagues supported my developing effective research relationships with the participants and provided me with access to good, reliable and honest data. I had planned to fully adopt an emancipatory research approach and was keen to involve the participants throughout the interpretation and analysis stages of the study. However this was not possible due to the time constraints.

4.10.2 Ethical Dilemmas and Issues

Ethical dilemmas and concerns arose at all stages of the research process. The main issue was that of being an 'inside researcher' which identifies my position as a BME researcher and senior LSS practitioner studying the issue of 'race' and leadership in the sector in which I am employed as an independent consultant. The analysis and impact of 'insider epistemology' has been considered extensively by qualitative researchers (Tierney, 1995; Kvale, 1996) with Gunasekaia (2007) stating that the "informed perspective" of the interviewer may influence both observations and interpretations. The positivist view is that insider research and the issue of validity is problematic because of the interest in the subject of study. Positivist researchers like Kvale (1995) would argue that in my position, any results may be distorted. There are also many cited advantages of being an insider researcher and it can be argued that participants are more open and honest in their responses (e.g. Tierney, 1995). I approach this ethical dilemma from the viewpoint of Denzin (1989) who states that;

"interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher" (p12)

As indicated earlier, I also argue against the concept of neutrality and this view is echoed by Rose (1995) who agrees that;

“There is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one’s biases. And if you do not appreciate the force of what you’re leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you’re doing” (p. 77)

Being familiar with the challenges and the importance of situating myself in this type of position and discourse, I anticipated and therefore prepared myself for issues that may have arisen.

One problem I had experienced whilst undertaking research with BME colleagues in the past was the issue of assumptions made about my understanding of their personal experiences of race. This is based on the fact that I am also from a BME background and being prepared with additional probing questions is an important factor when undertaking interviews in this context.

One of the issues I acknowledged as the research activities developed was the fact that I at times found myself getting emotionally involved with some of the sometimes upsetting experiences that participants were sharing with me. I also became an ‘informal’ adviser to some participants who came to me for advice after being interviewed. This was in line with my role as a trainer of aspiring BME FE managers leaders and led to my developing closer working relationships with some. In order to address this, I constantly reflected on and reviewed the strategies I had adopted to ensure that the reliability of the process was maintained. The possibility of researcher bias was reduced by the fact that I adopted data and methodological triangulation strategies by using interviews and focus groups as well as collecting data from previous reports and studies.

Another key ethical issue was my personal experience of dealing with barriers to my own leadership progression, which could have been the cause of bias in any results.

I prepared myself for these factors by adopting an ethical approach that centred on issues of responsibility, accountability, legality, sensitivity and confidentiality. I paid particular attention to the interpretation of oral histories as discussed by Roberts (2002) who raised the difficulties that can be encountered for both the researcher and the participants when undertaking biographical research. I recognised that conducting qualitative research based on narrative and life history approaches would involve a high level of awareness around the issue of researcher bias. However, as discussed earlier, by recognising and understanding my position and stance as a black researcher, this study could never be fully value free and this is supported by the CRT framework I adopted. As Sikes (cited in Bathmaker, 2010, p20) states, the narrative and life history approach ‘...carries a heavy ethical burden’ and goes on to acknowledge that in this context;

“Ethical practice demands that a researcher/writer states where they are positioned with regard to their work” (p19)

4.10.3 Ethical Framework

I adopted a clear ethical framework and model from the outset of the research and some of the issues have been discussed earlier in this chapter. The ethical approval form and ethical guidelines all served as working documents to which I was able to refer. The framework I based my ethical approach on is that put forward by some feminist researchers and which is based on a ‘model of responsibility’ and care rather than outcomes as discussed by Mauthner et al (2002).

Figure 4 on page 92 uses the Ahern model to summarise the key ethical factors and dilemmas I identified and includes a review of the actions I took to address these ethical concerns. The table highlights a number of related aspects of possible researcher bias including the dilemmas of my being a BME professional in the FE sector and it states the actions I took to address any bias that might have existed around my own personal values and conflict of roles. This was particularly important because of my position of being a black researcher with a background of having experienced some of the

issues described by the respondents and also because of my recent professional role which involved developing and delivering positive action programmes to BME staff in FE.

Other aspects covered included addressing any possible researcher bias with the selection of documentation and literature reviewed. I also examined potential participant bias in relation to sample bias and the impact that the perception of others about the participants who attended the focus groups might have.

4.10.4 Ethical issues with the interviews and focus groups

All the respondents from the earlier research consented orally and then in writing by email to my using the information. Information regarding the focus group and interview process were given beforehand (see 6) and again at the start of each session. This gave me the opportunity to inform participants of the possible consequences of taking part in the process and to gauge their political awareness of the issues being raised. I addressed the possible emotional effects that taking part in the process might have on participants through extending the session to include a CPD workshop. I also built in time for a plenary and debrief at the end of the questioning and response stage.

The sessions were used as a networking opportunity and participants were encouraged to network and share contact details. Based on this approach to the focus group meetings, all the participants agreed that the benefits outweighed any emotionally negative impact that may have occurred.

Figure 4 – Table Indicating Ethical Issues and Action Taken to Limit Researcher Bias

Ethical Issue	Action taken to limit Researcher Bias
Possible bias based on my being a BME professional in the sector	I communicated the personal ethical dilemmas I faced to those involved in the research and promoted an open and honest dialogue about this. I recognised the dilemmas at all stages of the design, analysis and interpretation of the study. As indicated in the body of the research.
Participants assuming my understanding of their experiences of racism and placing me in the position of the trust	Probing questions prepared to elicit their personal views. Additional time for support built in for de-briefing sessions to take place.
My Personal Value Systems	I clarified to myself the areas in which I knew I was subjective which included my empathy with other staff who were experiencing similar barriers to their professional progression as had been and was continuing to experience. Keeping this awareness in mind was paramount to the analysis and interpretation stage of the research
Role Conflicts	The roles in which I was located; BME professional, training consultant delivering BME positive action programmes and researcher caused some feelings of anxiety on my part as I recognised the potential and actual role conflicts. In order to alleviate these personal worries, I constantly reflected on my position and revisited this at every step of the study.
Publication of Findings	It was made clear from the outset, that this was a piece of research, which was to be used for my Doctorate only at this stage.
Literature Review & Researcher Bias	The literature review and references made to other documentation and reports supported the analysis in a way that I ensured did not reflect the same views as my own.
Respondents involved in previous research	All respondents to focus groups I personally conducted as part of the previous research were informed
Participants Bias in Data Collection	Once I recognised that there could be some bias in relation to responses by participants at the focus groups and in the interviews, these were acknowledged during the analysis stage.
Impact of participants involvement in attending focus groups	Respondents will be briefed as to the background of the issue and implications of taking part of an emancipatory research process. At this point they will be given the choice of attending or not. For the participants, sensitive areas of discussion around their actual lives were being exposed and analysed. Respondents will be given a debrief after the session including an opportunity to discuss the process. Using my professional knowledge and skills, I will discuss Continuing Professional Development and career opportunities as part of this debrief

(based on a Reflexivity Model of Evaluation, Ahern, 1999: p408-10)

4.11 Analysis of the Data

4.11.1 Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data collected were limited to figures and statistics acquired from secondary sources of information and they related mainly to demographic trends and ethnicity profiles of staff. Measures of central tendency such as averages, percentages and raw figures were used as the basis of interpreting trends and patterns. Some reference to analysing relationships between variables, particularly as they related to the ethnic breakdown of staff in the sector by region is presented in the findings and cross-tabulation demonstrates whether or not there is a relationship between variables. Any relationships or differences observed were used as a basis for interpretation of the current situation concerning employment, ethnicity and demographic patterns in the sector.

4.11.2 Qualitative data analysis

The largely qualitative nature of the design of this research meant I analysed and interpreted the information as part of an ongoing data analysis activity. Dey (1993) described the analysis of qualitative data as an iterative process and this aptly identifies the approach I took when coding, then revisiting the coding and framework whilst building on the constantly emerging themes. As indicated earlier some themes that emerged required me to extend the review of the literature to incorporate themes that had not initially been introduced including the issue of BME leadership styles.

Because I was able to keep the data and the actual research relatively small scale I did not make use of any computer-assisted qualitative analysis software such as NVivo and manually coded all data. The focus groups and interviews generated a substantial but manageable amount of data and I used a word-processor to note the key issues and themes from the focus groups and fully transcribed the interviews. A session summary sheet was used to collate and information from the focus groups and a sample of a response sheet is attached in appendix eight. The summary sheet allowed

me to pull together factors which were raised in terms of the relevance to the research questions, any new hypotheses or themes indicated and implications for questions I could ask of focus group participants.

Dey (1993) recognised that the *'need to take account of contexts is a recurrent theme in qualitative analysis'* (p32). As part of these ongoing iterative activities I considered the location of the focus groups, the group members of the participants and their relationships with each other and the differing backgrounds of the participants. As Dey goes on to say *'meaning can vary with context'* (p33) and all these variables had the potential to have an effect on the meaning of some of the themes and points that emerged.

4.11.3 Data Analysis

I used the Miles and Huberman (1994) data analysis framework initially and though I found the model too structured for this research I produced a simplified model. Having a degree of quasi- scientific elements was an important aspect of my analysis given the need to address the complex ethical issues and the importance of ensuring valid and justifiable results. The analytical methods I developed and adopted are listed in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Data Analysis Methods Adopted

Codes	Codes allocated using a first and second level coding system. The first level coding attaches labels to groups of words used and the second level groups the initial codes into a smaller number of themes. These codes were modified during the course of analysis.
Interim Summary	An interim summary to follow the completion of the interviews and this to be used to highlight any gaps that might be filled during the focus groups.
Matrix Model	The matrix model (tables with rows and columns) to be used to present the information gathered.

4.11.4 Themes, Coding and classifying the data

Completing the literature review supported me with establishing key themes and issues which I then used as the focus for the analysis of the secondary data. Evaluating this information gave me the basis for the design of the questions for the focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews as well as the topics for reporting the findings.

Tabular representation provided for me an effective way of managing some of the more complex interactions of the themes. It enabled me to identify the concepts employed and their inter-relation. I used advanced word-processing and spreadsheet facilities such as find, hyper-texting and other similar functions to support the analysis and presentation of the data. This approach avoided the sometimes mechanistic approach to the use of software for analysing data. In my coding system I managed to capture the key themes that informed the research question in a way that represented the context and complexity of the issues at hand, as indicated by the coding structures. The structure of the level one coding sheet (Figure 6 below) indicates coding issues and themes demonstrating the initial complexity.

Figure 6: First Level Coding – Structure of coding sheet

No	THEMES	COMMENT/STATEMENT (ELICITED FROM; Documentary analysis and Primary research	By Whom
1	Recruitment and Selection Processes		
2	Covert Racism (below the line micro-political factors)		
3	College Training & Development Processes		
4	Training & Development Positive Action		
5	Expectations and Aspirations of leadership (attrition)		
6	Multiple Discriminatory Factors (gender, disability, sexuality, etc.)		
7	Leadership Style		
8	Not fitting in (Assimilation, pluralism, identity issues)		
9	Culture or region of the organisation		
10	Overt Racism		
11	Other		

4.12 Profile of Research Population

4.12.1 Classification of Ethnicity

Data on ethnicity are normally fully classified in terms of 17 different ethnic groupings. For the purpose of this study these data have been classified here into five more general ethnic groups of white, BME, mixed, other and not known. Appendix nine provides a detailed list of the original ethnic categories and how they map on to the re-classified equivalent category. The findings do not include responses by full ethnic classifications as any interpretation of results relating to people outside the white ethnic group would not add to the analysis of the data.

4.12.2 Management Levels

The management levels referred to have been described as first, second, third and fourth tiers. A description of these levels is given in Figure 7 below;

Figure 7: Levels and Roles of FE Staff

1 st Tier	Principals and Chief Executives
2 nd Tier	Directors and Senior Manager (SMT)
3 rd Tier	Heads of Department, Head of Service, Heads of Faculties
4 th Tier	Curriculum & Service Area Managers (First Line)

4.12.3 National BME Staff Profile

Statistics from the LLUK's 2007 'Analysis of Staff Individualised Record Data (FE Colleges in England)' contained information that is no longer included in later records. The information contained in Figure 8 shows the level of BME staff under-representation across all the regions of England in 2007. The data demonstrate that non-white ethnic groups are under-represented as managers across all regions of England.

Figure 8: Percentage of managers (Tier 3 and above) by ethnicity and UK region (adapted from LLUK, 2007, SIR data)

	BME Managers (%)	White Managers (%)	Not known	TOTAL
East Midlands	8.5	82.1	9.4	100
East of England	5.4	89.3	5.3	100
Greater London	27.3	66.4	6.3	100
North East	2.3	92.5	5.2	100
North West	4.3	91.3	4.4	100
South East	6.7	87.5	5.8	100
South West	5.1	82.8	12.1	100
West Midlands	9.4	88.3	2.3	100
Yorkshire and the Humber	5.3	93.8	0.9	100
TOTAL %	8.2	86.0	5.8	

BME figure consists of all categories except for 'White-British' and 'not known/not provided'.

The most recent report of staff data (2009b) found staff from white ethnic profiles were more likely to be in senior management roles than those from minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2007/08, of the total proportion of senior managers and other managers in the further education college workforce in England, 4.0 per cent of staff from white backgrounds were in senior management roles compared to only 1.8 per cent of staff from minority ethnic groups. (p49). These findings demonstrate that initiatives to support BME staff progression are not necessarily having the expected impact on the increase of BME leader numbers. The LLUK acknowledge a key priority in their 'Workforce Development strategy (2009c) which states the need to monitor this distribution to ensure that *'...management opportunities are accessed equally across all ethnic groups so that the differences in rates are minimised'* (p48).

4.13 Respondent and Participant Profile

4.13.1 Secondary Data

Responses from the data collected were gathered from survey questionnaires administered to existing BME staff, Human Resources managers (HRM's) and managers responsible for recruitment in FE colleges. Figures 9 and 10 below indicate the composition of responses I examined from the 2008 study.

Figure 9: Questionnaire Responses from Secondary Data

2008 SURVEY RESPONSES FROM QUESTIONNAIRES	HR MANAGER	MANAGERS	BME STAFF
	71	112	194
TOTAL NO OF RESPONDENTS	377		

Figure 10: BME Questionnaire Responses from Secondary Data

2008 SURVEY BME REPOSSES FROM QUESTIONNAIRES	Caribbean origin	African origin	Indian origin	Other ethnic groups (small proportions)
	64	35	29	66
TOTAL NO OF BME RESPONDENTS	194			

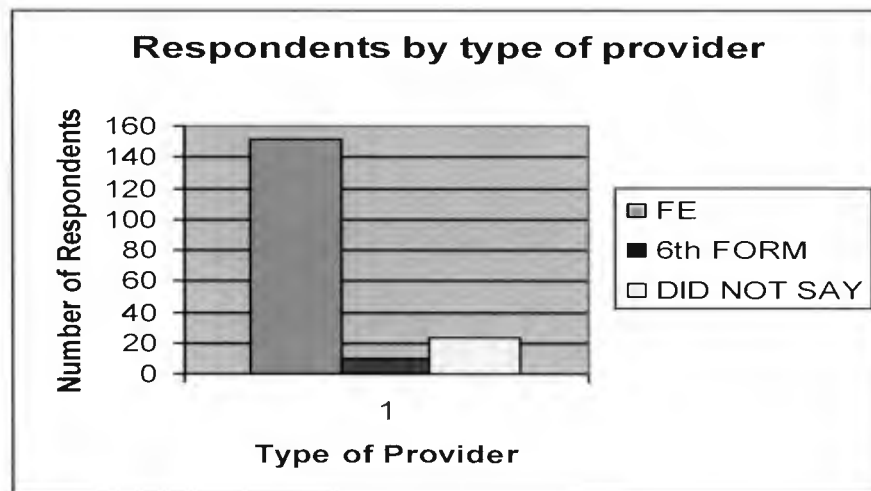
Of the responses from BME staff two thirds of these respondents were female. The survey analysed for secondary research activities produced a total of 377 questionnaire responses, made up of 71 Human Resources (HR) Directors, 112 Managers (Tiers one, two and three) and 194 BME staff.

Further breakdowns of the profile of HR directors demonstrated that nearly three quarters (72%) were female, a quarter (25%) were male and three per cent unknown. This female numerical predominance is reflected in the fact that women aged between 35 and 54 made up more than half (56%) of the participants who engaged in the 2008 research.

The breakdown of the HR and managers responses, show that managers who were involved with making staff appointments had predominantly white ethnic profiles suggesting that BME staff are more likely to hold lower tier positions.

For analysis purposes it was found to be useful to obtain a breakdown of the type of providers that the staff who took part in the 2008 research worked in. It was found that BME staff respondents were largely from FE colleges (78%). Five per cent responded from sixth-form colleges and 12 per cent did not identify their institution type (see Figure 11). Specialist colleges and other FE provision were represented in small proportions, however this suggests that most BME staff in FE are located in general FE colleges.

Figure 11: Respondents by type of provider (Barnett, Deane and Gittens, 2008)



Analysis of the participant responses from the secondary data found that all of the English regions were represented with 42% of BME staff located in London. Thirteen per cent were from the South East, 11 per cent from the West Midlands and six per cent from the North West.

The ages of the respondents were skewed toward a younger age profile. Two-thirds were aged between 25 and 44 and with the remaining aged 45 or above. The gender profiles showed that nearly two thirds were female (64%)

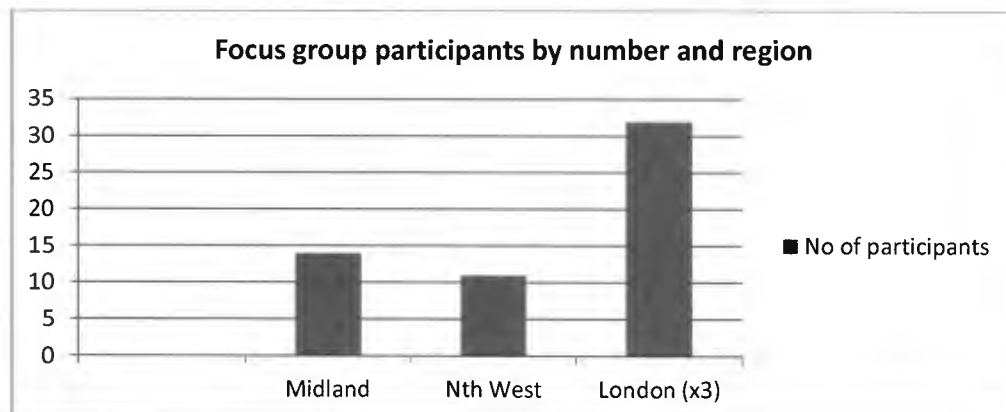
and one third male (33%). Ninety per cent of respondents did not consider themselves disabled, with four per cent declaring a disability and six per cent not answering that question.

4.13.2 Focus Groups

A total of 88 BME staff were sent personal invitations asking them if they wished to take part in the focus groups. Those invited were also asked to forward the invitation on to others who might be interested. Figure 12 show the breakdown of the participants who attended the focus group meetings.

Three of the focus groups were held in London on different days, with one in the Midlands and one in the North West region. London participants totalled 32 (56%) with 14 (25%) participants attending the meeting in the Midland and 11 (19%) from the North-West.

Figure 12: Focus Groups - participant numbers and region



The focus group participants' age profile again demonstrated a younger age range with nine per cent under 25 and 79 per cent aged between 25 and 44. The remaining seven (12%) participants were aged between 45 and 54. Only one person out of 57 considered her/himself disabled. A more detailed breakdown by region is given in appendix ten.

It took some time to arrange the meetings as setting a date, getting people to group gatherings and setting up appropriate venues was challenging. It is acknowledged that one of the disadvantages of arranging focus groups is that they are not natural but organised events. I was also aware of the limitations in terms of the ability to generalise findings to a whole population. This is discussed earlier whilst examining the issue of sampling bias and I attempted to limit the effect of these disadvantages by ensuring that I had as wide a representation of BME staff operating at different leadership levels. Participants included teachers and support staff from a range of providers and stakeholders, including work based learning providers, colleges, sixth form colleges, the LSC and the local authorities (LA's). The interaction between the participants enabled them to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences.

The participants who attended the five meetings I held all actively engaged in the process and it appeared from the responses and conduct of the meeting they felt empowered. A multiplicity of views and emotional processes were elicited and exchanged and the discussions introduced new and relevant information including the discussion around BME leadership styles. This led to me introducing an additional section to the literature review and themed findings and demonstrated a need for further research in this area. The groups were particularly useful as it allowed for the differences between the professional levels of participants to be assessed and analysed. In this way it allowed me to explore the degree of consensus on the topic regardless of roles and levels. The overall result was that I gained a wide range of information in a relatively short period of time.

4.14 Summary

The research methods I adopted and the data analysis frameworks I reviewed and developed all helped me to identify the issues and address the research questions in a comprehensive way. The literature and models I assessed as part of designing my methods identified specific research discourses and frameworks that I was able to reflect on, adapt and relate to

the subject of my own inquiry. My concern in relation to, and the emphasis I placed on the ethical considerations, allowed me to feel confident that my findings would reflect a reduced bias. The findings will be reliable and based on my awareness of the need to adopt the Ahern (1999) model of reflexivity which considers the possibility of subjectivity in the research process and interpretation of the findings due to my own values and views as a researcher.

The use of focus groups and interviews was chosen to ensure triangulation and further elaborate and explain the findings. The research paradigm and life history approaches I chose reflect the need to allow the lived experience of the participants to be revealed and the methods discussed promoted a dialogue between the researcher and participants.

The results of the research activities were examined in two distinct phases. The first phase covered an examination of the results from the literature review and the secondary data collection process and the second phase focused on the findings from the primary research activities. This chapter has set out the context for the presentation and analysis of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

Research Findings – Summary of the Themes

5.1 Introduction

The paper so far has recognised the limited progress that has been made by the Further Education and Sixth Form college sector (FE) on increasing the diversity of sector leaders. This has been demonstrated through the documents and literature that have been reviewed. The primary aim of the research is to find evidence that identifies why this under-representation still exists, despite initiatives to address the issue. Other reasons for undertaking this research are based on the political motive to establish a new paradigm for the discussion given that the initiatives the sector has invested in to address this lack of BME staff advancement have not been as successful as they should be. The research framework adopted to collect the data for this study has been based on the Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach which offers a radical discourse around leadership, 'race' and racism. Prior to this research, CRT had not yet penetrated studies about barriers to leadership progression and 'race'. Together with other relevant key definitions of race and racism, the findings include an analysis of how these concepts are reflected in the experiences and viewpoints of staff in the FE sector.

The research methods included a review of relevant policy and research documentation pertaining to BME leadership and progression issues in FE as well as other public sector initiatives. A review of relevant leadership studies and academic literature was also undertaken. This was followed by a mixed-methods approach to the study which included conducting focus groups and one-to-one interviews.

This chapter presents the findings of the research by reporting on the major themes that have emerged from the literature review and the deductive analysis of the primary research coding activities. The themes are presented as sub-headings and include some interviewee life history accounts and

several respondent quotations which allow the reader to fully appreciate the participant experiences.

Responses obtained from analysing the secondary data are distinguished by indicating the year 2008, the year in which the Barnett, Deane and Gittens research was undertaken. Responses from the primary research interviews and focus groups I undertook for this thesis are clearly identified and annotated by the year 2009.

5.2 Definitions, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Colour-Blindness

In the literature review I examined documentation, which identified key definitions including the underlying theories and concepts of 'race', institutional racism, micro-politics and succession planning. I explored the nature of these concepts in the context of barriers to BME progression and leadership issues and found that an understanding of the issues of 'race', racism, institutional racism and micro-politics is under-developed in the field of leadership and diversity.

5.2.1 'Race', Racism and 'Race' Discrimination

The literature suggests that analyses and communication of theories of 'race' and racism could support the sector's understanding of why initiatives to address the lack of representation at senior leadership levels of BME staff are not as successful as should be the case. In discussion of a behavioural model of racism and racist behaviour put forward by Ridley (1995), key features were identified: '*many possible behaviours*', '*systematic behaviour*', '*preferential treatment*', '*inequitable outcomes*' and '*nonrandom victimisation*'. This model is used to demonstrate how consistent inequitable outcomes can be found very easily in FE, exemplified by the fact FE colleges in the sector has 11 BME principals, three per cent of all college principals. I also found that examining these theoretical paradigms could support the understanding of what many of our leaders in the sector want to believe is institutional and micro-political organisational behaviour and not racism. The examination of the theories and models demonstrates how these behaviours can result in unintentional racist outcomes.

Further results from the policy documents examined found that legislation and the public duties provide legislative systems and frameworks for embedding good 'race' equality practice. This works for the overt barriers to BME staff progression that exist.

5.2.2 Micro-politics and institutional racism

Figure 13: Life History Case Study B – Micro-politics

MINA'S STORY

Mina has worked in her college for 6 years. She describes herself as ambitious and dedicated and would love to get into a career in management. Really because *'I'd like to have more of an influence on the way things are done around here'*. Mina's background is in commercial banking where she had a successful career. She came into teaching when she started her family as she believed that the hours would fit in with her child care and other domestic responsibilities. Things have not worked out quite like that, so she is now thinking about taking the step to move up the ladder.

One of the things she believes is stopping her is her unwillingness to get involved in the office politics. She does not get involved in the *'it's who you know'* mantra and firmly believes that she will move up the ladder whether or not she *'plays the game'*.

She has however noticed that there have been many times when she has attended staff meetings where it appears that things have already been discussed, alliances have been made, and that these are not always activities that have taken place on the college premises. As a young mother and as a Muslim, she is not able and chooses not to engage in some of the social activities that she knows a lot of other staff get involved in. This means that she sometimes feels a bit excluded. She does not go to the pub on a Friday night, but knows that this is where a lot of discussion and, she believes, decision-making takes place.

Her dilemma is that despite not wanting to get involved in this side of things, she has seen others who do, progress much quicker up the ladder.

Mina's story gives a picture of how some informal organisational behaviour can impact on the progression of BME staff. The literature and policy review found that micro-politically based racist behaviours and *'below the line'* activities are more insidious and damaging. The findings suggest that it is these covert acts that currently operate as the main barriers to BME progression and most BME respondents believed that these obstacles to their progression cannot necessarily be tackled by the further embedding of structural systems and positive action initiatives. A London focus group respondent echoed these findings by stating:

"It doesn't matter how many positive action programmes you run. The sector needs to recognise, and more importantly accept that it is the corridor conversations and office politics culture that do the real damage. We have a way to go to change this culture before the issue is sustainably tackled." (London Focus Group, 2009)

The review found micro-political behaviours can be interpreted as forms of institutional discrimination that can include unintentional racist acts and it is these which are the most insidious because of their micro-political nature.

Based on a number of prominent authors' views, such as Gillborn, the review demonstrates the importance of recognising that the central notion of the term "racism" should be used in relation to the subtle and hidden operations of micro-politics and power that disadvantage BME groups. It does, however, offer an acknowledgement that this is a discourse of 'race' that many are not comfortable with.

Some participants recognised this important and powerful form of organisational behaviour, and raised this issue in their responses:

"Inductions will not prepare you for the culture and politics." (Survey Respondent, 2008)

"I feel that it is who one knows rather than one's ability to perform in a certain role." (Survey Respondent, 2008)

"I think BME staff are less likely to be promoted or get the training and development they need because they do not have access to the informal networks that tend to form around colleges." (Survey Respondent, 2008)

"I feel there are opportunities created for other staff to get experience at doing a job and a lot more help is offered to them than to BME staff." (Survey Respondent, 2008)

The primary research activities found that BME respondents referred to these micro-political factors frequently and they believe they are disadvantaged by institutional racism and micro-political practices. The following statements exemplify these beliefs:

"It's not even who you know but who knows you that gets you promoted in the sector" (CH, Middle Manager, BME Interviewee, 2009)

"I would imagine that it is different for Europeans because they will have their networks in place already and this is in terms of support and protection.... with BME staff just coming up we haven't got that" (London Focus Group, 2009)

".....when I come in and see that people (who) are at certain levels aren't equipped or skilled to be working at that level...how the hell can that someone support you. There are too many people across the board who have been put into posts who should not be there.... That's why you get blockages....because they see us come along and are threatened by us. They know that there are many of us who are better than them" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

The majority of respondent views demonstrate that it is the barriers being caused by the micro-political and institutionally racist behaviours of individuals and organisations that are now the main barriers to BME progression and leadership development.

5.2.3 Critical Race Theory

In analysing Critical Race Theory (CRT) I found that this is a relatively new aspect of the theory of 'race' and racism in the UK which, if understood and communicated, could make a difference to the management and leadership development approaches required to change the BME representation agenda. The theory is an effective approach to examining ways of addressing the more subtle forms of racism that FE is accused of systematically practising. CRT takes the view that racism is ordinary, everyday normal business and findings from interviews and focus groups demonstrate that this is a view commonly held by BME staff and acted out by white colleagues. The following BME senior manager comments were taken from the secondary research findings;

"I have not complained about my deputy constantly making jokes about my 'suntan'. I feel stupid even talking about it now, but in fact it really upsets me. He does it to undermine me. I could actually discipline him myself, but I know this would send

messages out to the college that I was 'difficult' and I want to avoid this. The principal is lovely but we have never ever spoken about what it is like for me as the sole BME manager here, and I think he wouldn't have a clue that this was an issue in any way or what to do if I really told him. So, I put up with it". (BME Senior Manager, 2008)

Some focus group participants amplified this view:

"LSIS need to train the people who deliver the courses. I was insulted by a trainer I had whilst on the Senior Leadership programme. I was told by a colleague that I was lucky to have been taken on for my position. I said ...'what ...because of the colour of my skin?'. The person said.....'yes' and then..... 'no, no, no" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

"White colleagues are not made aware of the BME experience and the issues we have to face everyday...they need to understand us more so that when decisions are made about promotion and senior positions, they are fully informed about us and not by the stereotype images and rumours they have in their psyche" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

"You need broad shoulders to be Black and work in this sector....anyone who is in the sector has to have a steeliness about them. The sector is hard work anyway but being from a BME background makes it worse" (North Focus Group, 2009)

"(management need to)...just recognise that there are issues that are specific to BME staff...not that others don't have issues as well, but to recognise this. Do a questionnaire even.....nobody has ever asked us how we feel....we don't have a significant number of BME staff so this should be easy" (North Focus Group, 2009)

The literature discussed in the review found that it might be difficult to open up a conversation about some of these newer theories of 'race' because they tend to be associated with the more radical approaches to 'race' theory. Many would not be comfortable engaging with these discussions which could lead to the introduction of controversial progressive approaches. This is demonstrated by the responses of some of the white respondents when asked to comment on their views about positive action initiatives:

"I am uncomfortable with the idea that special measures should be put in place for BME staff. I have worked hard and expect to progress on the basis of that alone and not because I am a BME employee." (HR Director, Greater London, 2008)

“All potential applicants and employees, regardless of background ethnicity, should be judged equally. Otherwise, were you to prioritise BME applicants, this would be discrimination against whites.” (Middle Manager, East Midlands, 2008)

“The college only has a handful of BME staff (representative of our locality). It would not be appropriate to offer special opportunities to these colleagues at the expense of others.” (Senior Manager, North West, 2008)

These respondents demonstrated that they have adopted the ‘colour-blind’ approach and do not consider colour and ‘race’ as an issue. A number of white participant responses, particularly those in more senior or human resource (HR) roles, reflected this view which suggests that it tends to be held by many white college managers, who do not recognise discriminatory practices. This is highlighted by the following quotes and comments:

“(there are) none (barriers to progression) – ethnicity plays no part.” (White Head of HR, South East, 2008)

“Lack of BME staff in senior positions is because of the lack of profile of BME staff.” (White HR Manager, East Midlands, 2008)

“Often the number of applicants from BME backgrounds is small.” (White HR Director, Greater London, 2008)

“(There is) a lack of BME staff putting themselves forward for leaderships roles.” (White HR Director, Greater London, 2008)

Some of those who participated in the primary research and one-to-one interviews also echoed this opinion;

“They just weren’t ready for leadership five years ago” (PW, White Principal Interviewee, 2009)

“They sometimes encourage animosity because they can’t hide their often justified anger....it can be difficult working as a team with an angry set of clever but challenging staff with issues about their race. This is a shame as many are effective when appointed” (SD, White Principal Interviewee, 2009).

Another aspect of CRT suggests that moves to address racism advance certain groups materialistically and physically. This classic example of '*interest convergence*' is demonstrated by some focus group respondents. They believed that being '*allowed*' to go on positive action programmes was not entirely for their individual benefit:

"The reason they allowed me go on it was because it was free. There is no way that the college would have paid for it". (London Focus Group, 2009)

"It's an easy and cheap way for them to tick the boxes demonstrating that they are doing something to support E&D (equality and diversity)" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

"They've only organised this because of the impending re-inspection...we got a poor grade for leadership and management and E&D" (London Focus Group, 2009)

5.3 Succession Planning, the FE Succession Crisis and Diversification

The continuing challenge of recruiting senior leaders across all public sectors has been highlighted and the review found that succession planning in the public sector is generally less strategic than in the private sector. In the case of FE, there is currently a leadership crisis which evidence suggests has not been tackled effectively because of a lack of institutional and sector-wide strategic succession planning and management strategies.

Barnett, Deane and Gittens (2008), focused the key findings of their report entitled '*Succession Planning and Racial Equality in the Further Education System*' on the issue of the lack of succession planning and found evidence that most college leaders were not taking a serious and strategic approach to their succession management. The report highlighted the key concern of recruitment and selection practices leading to uncoordinated measures that were potentially racially discriminatory. It found that despite the amount of research, sector initiatives and perceived commitment from senior leaders in the sector, the measurable impact of BME staff progression which could have had an impact on the succession crisis was not being seen.

Where college managers did recognise the importance of having a succession planning strategy in place, nearly half of them (48%) felt that a strategy for BME staff might be a solution, with a quarter seeing this as not being the case (Barnett, Deane and Gittens, 2008).

Some respondents saw BME staff as playing a part in the solution to the succession crisis and in particular saw them contributing as role models to encourage minority ethnic staff to go for leadership positions. The following comment is typical of responses that recognised the potential contribution of BME staff to the succession crisis:

"From my experience of BME teachers and managers, I have found them to have more commitment to promoting E & D as they have struggled to get to where they have. A significant number are bilingual or multilingual and understand the community – skills which are overlooked in the selection process." (Senior Manager, South West, 2008)

As indicated earlier, the analysis of the documentary review suggested that most college leaders were not taking a serious and strategic approach to their succession management and that despite it not being the intention, this had led to uncoordinated measures which many respondents viewed as potentially racially discriminatory practices:

"Principals and managers do not recognise the importance of a diverse workforce and tend to employ from their networks." (Senior Manager, South West, 2008)

"I was told that the person would get the job even before they were appointed." (BME Staff Member, 2008)

These views are echoed in the findings of the primary research undertaken in 2009:

"Jobs are written for people so you know there's no point going for it.....jobs are even created for people....these are never BME staff" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

“There is a lack of true transparency.....it seems ok on the surface, but it is not very difficult to manipulate the system to ensure that the person they want for the job gets it and that certain groups are kept out and stay at the level they feel they should stay at. This is where the institutional racism starts and it is very easy in this system to get away with it” (London Focus Group, 2009)

The documentary review contained evidence that BME professionals in the sector were continuing to experience barriers to their progression. The year 2002 was a pivotal one for FE when strategic and operational leadership issues were reviewed and placed at the forefront of sector policies and priorities.

The National Survey of Black Staff in Further Education (2002) established a baseline which found that less than half of all colleges at that time (45%) had specific equality training programmes for staff and the majority of colleges (92%) did not have Black staff support or development groups with only one per cent of colleges having a mentoring programme specifically for BME staff. As a result of these findings, the sector and some colleges implemented strategies and processes to address the acknowledged barriers to progression that BME staff were facing.

Following the national survey of 2002, the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (CBSFE) (2002) reported that, although seven per cent of all college staff were from a BME background, only three per cent were college managers, with one per cent being principals. Figures from the 2005/2006 LLUK FE staff data records (2007) indicated that at that time only two per cent of principals were from a BME background indicating a drop. Latest figures, at the time of writing and based on personal knowledge of each individual BME principal, confirm a three per cent representation (11 out of 384 colleges in the UK).

This demonstrates a marginal increase but is in no way representative of the number of BME staff in the sector or the BME student college population which now stands at 20 per cent. Importantly, seven years on from the CBSFE report and despite the amount of research, effort and commitment in

this area, the LLUK LSS staff data analysis (2009b) made it clear that the measurable impact of BME staff progression had not been seen.

A few managers did not recognise any issues of discriminatory practices around the employment or progression of BME staff, however it was noted that these tended to be in areas where there were fewer BME staff employed generally. One respondent from the Barnett, Deane and Gittens report stated that:

"I have worked in several institutions and have not noted any difference in promotion and progression opportunities for BME staff." (Middle Manager, North West, 2008)

White managers were generally unaware of the negative experiences of their BME colleagues, particularly in terms of succession planning, though there is evidence that suggests that some did recognise the issues. Further responses from 2008 demonstrate this:

"I attended a BLI workshop and could not believe the treatment of some of my colleagues from a BME background experienced from senior staff." (HR Director Yorkshire & Humberside, 2008)

"From a white first-line manager's perspective, I try individually to support my black colleagues. I have seen things happen to BME and other minority staff (including myself in terms of my sexuality) that are not fair or equal but which cannot be proven as discrimination. This is why good people will not stay in the sector. I am just waiting for my redundancy otherwise I would have left ages ago because of inherent prejudice and bias in some colleges." (Senior Manager, South East, 2008)

These findings demonstrate that succession planning strategies have to be taken more seriously by FE and that current practices are potentially discriminatory. Succession planning strategies in FE have to be developed from a fundamental standpoint of the recognition, awareness and understanding of barriers and opportunities available to the progression of BME professionals.

5.4 BME Staff Recruitment and Selection

An analysis of other publications found the continuing challenge of recruiting senior leaders was a concern held by all public sectors (Collinson, 2005; Lumby and Coleman, 2007; Equality Challenge Unit, 2009). These reports also gave an insight into the leadership styles and dynamics that inform how leaders 'fit' into the culture of organisations. This highlighted the need for further debate about the emergence and exploration of a BME leadership style.

5.5 BME Leadership, Training and Development and Positive Action

5.5.1 BME Leadership

The documentary review found an overwhelming lack of representation of BME leaders in FE sector as a whole. This was despite a number of leadership development initiatives and positive action programmes being undertaken. For example, the annual Centre for Excellence (CEL) governors' report of 2007 included the results of a survey conducted across all FE colleges in 2005. It found that of 6,705 governors 521 were from a BME background, 38 per cent had no BME governors at all with 20 per cent having one BME governor. Of all 521 BME governors, only nine were chairs and the rest were business or community governors. This demonstrates the level of under-representation of BME leaders at governor level.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), (now the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)), reported in its Strategy for Equality and Diversity (2007) that out of 3201 LSC employees, only five per cent of senior and middle management posts were held by BME staff. Workforce data from the LLUK (2009a) also demonstrated a lack of representation, not only at leadership level but at all levels. Targets had been set to increase this number but recent organisational changes and the change in priorities have had an impact on the assessment and subsequent outcomes of these targets.

5.5.2 Training & Development

As indicated earlier, none of the respondents in this research were aware of their organisations having an internal succession planning strategy. Though providers carried out and engaged in internal and external staff training, the respondents did not recognise any internal strategies or initiatives in place to specifically support the development and progression of BME staff. One of the areas identified as important by respondents in the survey in terms of training and development was the offer of better opportunities, support and progression.

Other perceptions shared focused on the reasons their organisations had engaged in training and developing them;

"It is only because of the 100 per cent subsidy that is provided by the BLI (Black Leadership Initiative project, subsidised for BME staff by LSIS) that I was able to participate in the training opportunities that I have engaged in the past year. Other than that, there is no provision for developmental opportunities within the College, unless an individual is able to pay for themselves in most cases" (London Focus Group, 2009)

Other respondents from the focus groups had engaged in internal training and development initiatives and stated that the training and development process had been sufficient to support their progression;

"A tutor pushed me to go on to a higher education programme, which then changed my expectations to progress further on" (London Focus Group, 2009)

"My department has had a transformation in better student achievement rate and student retention and I have personally advanced academically through the college continuous professional development programme" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

"The college supported me through further teacher training and have contributed to my MA in literature so that I can advance as an English teacher" (North Focus Group, 2009)

"The informal communication with my line manager has been so valuable. I have been able to seek out and attend development training opportunities which has helped my growth" (North Focus Group, 2009)

There was evidence to suggest, however, that positive continuing professional development (CPD) experiences were not widespread;

"I have not been able to take up the opportunity of training due to the situation of not having a team to support me to perform my role"
(London Focus Group, 2009)

"The lack of training and development has resulted in me feeling unchallenged and unconfident and lacking focus and direction. I am trying to muddle my way through after various CEL (Centre for Excellence in Leadership) courses, but am not much further to my goal with a better job, and the longer it takes the more tedious my role is." (North Focus Group, 2009)

Participants in the 2008 survey were asked if they thought that their ethnic background had affected their training and development opportunities. According to their experience, 42 per cent did not think that ethnicity unfairly affects access to staff training and development in their college with 10 per cent thinking that ethnicity affects them unfairly. Forty-nine per cent did not respond to this question and it may well be that this could also be because they were not sure. This additional possible explanation could offer another interpretation of these findings, in that the respondents may have been wary about committing themselves to such a sensitive and decisive response.

5.5.3 Experience and Qualifications

Further findings suggest that the 'ghettoisation' of BME staff in certain subject areas also continues to act as a barrier to their progression. An analysis comparing the different ethnic groups suggested that BME staff groups were better qualified than their white counterparts (LLUK, 2009b).

"A comparison of the different ethnic groups shows that black and minority ethnic groups were better qualified than their white counterparts: 43.7 per cent of white staff held a NQF Level 6/7/8 qualification, as did 55.0 per cent of Asian and 52.8 per cent of Chinese/other staff". (p54).

This is echoed by the accounts of some BME staff who purposefully aimed to be better qualified than their white counterparts in order to be in a better position to compete for positions. Some responses from BME staff who attended the focus group of 2009 indicated these experiences:

"I have been for two jobs at my college which weren't even promotions. I wanted to get myself in a position where I would have more opportunities for promotion. On both occasions I have been told that I am over qualified, so what is that about?" (London Focus Group, 2009)

"After all those years of studying, knowing that I am being managed by people who are nowhere near as qualified as me can be very frustrating. Especially as there is no recognition through giving me opportunities to stretch myself or even by acknowledging it." (North Focus Group, 2009)

"When I asked to get support with doing my MA, my line manager said 'it won't help you to get promoted you know.'" (Midland Focus Group).

5.5.4 Positive Action Initiatives

The literature review suggested that positive action programmes are a strategy for supporting BME staff progression that is adopted in a range of public sector organisations. Having analysed some positive action initiatives in other sectors it is clear that FE would benefit from transparent and regular communications to organisation leaders and all staff regarding the purpose and objectives of positive action programmes.

"Views were mixed on the merits of positive action. Slightly more than half of the managers were opposed to positive action in principle. They argued that it was unfair to white staff, that it generated jealousy, that it was divisive and that it was unfair on BME staff, who should be promoted on merit rather than because of their race. This suite of arguments was deployed with remarkable consistency by those opposed to positive action" (Barnett, Deane & Gittens, 2008 p86)

What has emerged from the documentary and policy analysis undertaken is evidence that there are organisations in the FE and other public sector organisations that have attempted to address the issue of the progression of

BME staff into senior leadership positions. This is demonstrated by the number of organisations undertaking targeted advertising and internal and external leadership development initiatives.

The literature review also highlighted the fact that FE organisations, once they are made aware, generally engage with the positive action programmes which are available to support BME leadership development. Some participants reported that they had engaged in the external positive action programmes such as the Black Leadership Initiative (BLI) programme, First Steps and Introduction to Leadership programmes, run by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). Some of the respondents who took part in the Barnett, Deane and Gittens research commented on how attending the programmes were of immense benefit to their personal and professional development;

“Positive action is an important weapon in our armoury. We have sent numerous BME staff on First steps to leadership programmes and they have given us excellent feedback on it. We will continue to support this. The subsidy is extremely helpful.” (HR Director, South West, 2008)

All staff who had attended one of the courses commented on the positive impact it had had on their self development. The following statements were all recorded;

“I gained confidence from the programme (First Steps to Leadership) and am now starting to take more of a lead in my career progress”

Having attended the “leadership programme” (First Steps to Leadership) I now feel I could explore opportunities within FE”

“[they] helped me to understand my strengths and weakness and how to develop them both”

“I am now in a position whereby I am being exposed to various policies and issues relevant for First Line Managers.”

“I have proved myself through my ability/work in BME and have been rewarded in additional money and responsibility”
(Focus Group Attendees, 2009)

A 2004 evaluation of the Black Leadership Initiative programme found that all the respondents felt that the programme had had a personal impact on them. A large number reported that it had boosted their confidence, some had learned to be more assertive and for many it had raised their ambitions:

"It helped me think through issues and find the best solutions and gave me support at a difficult time in my career. It provided a forum away from work to discuss and strategise around professional issues." (p43)

"Originally I did not have major ambitions to become a Principal but I now realise what is needed to undertake such a role and pursue such a career. (p43)

This initial evaluation of the programme found that the cohorts comprised an older age range, with 46 per cent of participants falling within the 45-54 age group and over 60 per cent having worked in the sector for more than five years. This is remarkable given that the programmes are marketed at those who have not yet reached or had just been appointed to first line management positions. This indicated the number of experienced and older BME staff who had not progressed, even to a first line management level. There was, however, no comparative evidence available to suggest that this was not the norm for all staff in the sector, so this information cannot be relied on as being an accurate interpretation of the situation.

The programmes located in the London region were attended predominantly by staff of African and Caribbean ancestry, whereas a larger percentage of Indian and Pakistani ancestry attended the Midland and NW region programmes. Almost all the participants stated that the courses had provided them with ideas and actions which could be implemented at work. Participation on the courses had led to an increase in confidence among participants as well as to the creation of new networks. All the participants felt that the course had helped their professional development and the majority recorded the programme as making an immediate and sustained impact on a personal level. Mohammed's story in Figure 14 demonstrates the impact a positive action training and development programme had on his life and his career, but also demonstrates the difficulties some BME staff face

in accessing training. It goes on to suggest that even getting accurate career development and accurate information about the qualification requirements to progress within the sector can be a challenge.

Figure 14: Life History Case Study B – Positive Action

MOHAMMED'S STORY

Mohammed came to the UK as a refugee with a young family, over 15 years ago. Although he was a qualified University lecturer, he was not able to acquire a teaching or lecturer position in the UK as his experience and qualifications were not recognised. He started out as an IT technician, supporting with the installation of computers and basic media equipment having come to the UK. Very soon after his appointment, his ability to speak four other languages was noticed. Staff used the additional 'informal' support he was able to give to learners with English as a second language and he found himself being called upon more and more to help the admissions team and in some cases even with situations in classrooms and around the college generally.

At no point for nearly five years was he encouraged to attend any kind of training and he was left to his own resources to keep up with new IT equipment which for him was not a problem. He was not even aware that he was entitled to ask for training and in many ways because of his background and possibly because of the way that he was perceived, he felt grateful for the fact that he had a full time job.

Following a discussion with a friend who worked in another college, he heard about a course called the First Steps to Leadership which he applied for. Initially, his college would not agree to him taking it, as they did not think that the position he was in would benefit the college. After all, he was not on any management scale and had no prospects of ever getting on it. He persisted and eventually the college decided on a compromise. His line manager agreed to sign the form, but only if Mohammed took the 6 days he would be attending the programme as leave.

Mohammed completed the programme in 2005 which in his words was the '*best thing that he could have ever done*'. It raised his self esteem and made him '*believe in himself again*'. It also gave him some fundamental cultural and operational knowledge about the leadership system in this country. He put what he learnt into immediate action and in 2006 successfully applied for a job in a large Work Based Learning provider based in the Midlands as an IT lecturer. Whilst in this post he completed a C&G 7407 which enabled him to teach full time and soon after, he was promoted to his current role of IT manager which includes him supporting other IT staff and students.

He is really happy in his job now, but would like to gain a PGCE which would set him back on his goal of working full time as a University lecturer again, although he knows that this will be another challenge that he has to be realistic about. It has taken him 15 years to get here!

An evaluation of the First Steps and Introduction to Leadership positive action leadership development courses conducted in 2009 (Skyers and

Poorman) found that both these programmes were very well received by participants. They found the content, delivery and range of activities to be largely satisfactory. Participants received encouragement and time off by way of organisational support and, in most cases, attending the programmes was voluntary and through self selection. Over two-thirds of participants who attended the programmes were female.

The First Steps to Leadership programme includes sessions where guest speakers and BME principals share their leadership and sector specialist experience which the participants all stated were of great benefit. This again indicates the importance and impact of seeing BME role models for those individuals aiming to progress up the ladder.

Overall it appeared that participants felt that there were more advantages than disadvantages in having a group that consisted only of individuals and facilitators from BME backgrounds. These are listed in figure 15 below.

Figure 15: Advantages and Disadvantages of being in an all BME Positive Action group – themes of participant responses

Advantages	Disadvantages
Shared experiences with others	A different point of view was not available
Addressed issues faced by those from ethnic minority backgrounds	Narrower outlook
Felt comfortable to speak freely	Suspicion from 'white colleagues'
Able to identify and understand the same issues	White colleagues and leaders need to hear this
Openness among the participants, including trainers and guest speakers	No disadvantages shared by participants
Able to be open and share experiences and information on dealing with discrimination issues	White colleagues and leaders need to hear this
Encouraged and supported each other	No disadvantages shared by participants
Facilitators' ability to empathise with participants	No disadvantages shared by participants
Learned from people who are experts as they have been through it	No disadvantages shared by participants

There is a considerable degree of reticence about the use of positive action, largely due to the lack of understanding about what actually constitutes

positive action, as opposed to positive discrimination. This was found in the view of all respondent groups and despite the fact that some leaders and managers did recognise the need to engage in the processes, far too many opposed it due to this confusion. The view was particularly noticeable in the responses of white managers:

"I believe in a level playing field for all candidates and in not discriminating positively." (Senior Manager, East of England, 2008)

"All potential applicants and employees, regardless of background ethnicity, should be judged equally without getting a leg up. This is discrimination against whites." (Middle Manager, East Midlands, 2008)

"The college only has a handful of BME staff (representative of our locality). It would not be appropriate to offer special opportunities to these colleagues at the expense of others." (Senior Manager, North West, 2008)

Those managers who thought that positive action in favour of BME people was unnecessary did so because they believed that they were following a college-wide view. Thirteen per cent believed that the college saw positive action as marginalising some staff, 24 per cent believed that BME staff were already on a level footing with other staff. Other findings reflected the view that:

"Experience has shown that it doesn't work and creates other problems." (Senior Manager, North West, 2008)

"Not clear why BME staff would need more training than non-BME. I am not sure that this focus would be appreciated; it can be seen as being discriminatory in its own right." (SD, White Principal Interviewee, 2009)

Forty-five per cent of managers responding to the 2008 survey acknowledged that positive action is necessary in order to support BME staff to compete on equal terms. Many managers however, remain unconfident about how best to argue for positive action and do not use it.

Both the secondary and primary research activities found that BME staff themselves seem divided about the use of positive action strategies. However, a number of those who do not favour it reported that this was because of a fear of causing a negative reaction or upsetting white colleagues rather than because they opposed it in principle. Responses by BME staff to questions about the use of positive action seemed significantly influenced by their experiences of a negative, BME unfriendly college culture and a resulting desire to maintain a low or invisible profile for fear of attracting these negative consequences. One focus group participant reported that:

“I was told in front of a number of other staff in the staff-room that my attending a Black staff focus group was racist – ‘if we had a White staff focus group you lot wouldn’t be happy’. Although I was very offended by this statement, I found it difficult to air my feelings amongst a group of white colleagues who I work with everyday”
(London Focus Group, 2009)

Some of these findings reflect the colour blind approach that many college HE directors and managers take toward BME leadership and development strategies. They identify positive action as positive discrimination and as unfair in principle.

Despite these findings, the results from these studies, reports and initiatives all demonstrate that the ‘glass ceiling’ and its negative effect on BME staff progression continues to exist.

5.6 Other Public Sector Initiatives - Barriers to Progression

A documentary analysis of initiatives from public sectors organisations outside of FE identified very similar findings in terms of the issues they were experiencing with BME succession planning. There were clear similarities to the approaches being taken, with very similar responses at both individual and organisational level. Programmes to support BME staff progression into leadership positions included networking, mentoring, coaching initiatives and a range of positive action programmes which similarly appeared to have had

a positive effect on the individuals concerned, but limited effects on the numbers of staff progressing.

Research on schools dating back to the late 1980's has revealed that BME staff have continually experienced exclusionary practices in the teaching profession and during their teacher education and training (e.g. Bariso 2001; Boulton and Coldron 1993; Brah 1991; Osler 1997; Ross 2001). Powney and colleagues (2003) reported that there was a lower level of BME staff participating in leadership roles with 52 per cent remaining as teachers for the whole of their career, compared with 29 per cent of white women and 35 per cent of white males. They added that this may be partly because BME teachers are concentrated in Inner London and are not geographically mobile for family reasons. There was, however, evidence of hidden discrimination for teachers securing promotion. The research cited six responding heads who reported little evidence of discrimination but who identified barriers very similar to those reported in FE research, including marginalisation, indirect racist attitudes and the ghettoisation of BME staff into particular roles and positions – all compounded by a female glass ceiling which is particularly serious for BME women.

Additional evidence which highlights the similar experience of staff in FE is given by Harris et al (2003), who in a literature review examining the career progress of school deputy heads, noted the reliance on informal networks from which ethnic minorities were excluded. They also noted that BME teachers are less likely to be encouraged to apply for promotion.

According to the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), data on school leadership appointments from 2006 showed that just over one per cent of primary heads and just over three per cent of secondary heads came from a BME group. These statistics demonstrate that BME teachers in the schools sector are much less likely to be promoted to leadership positions than White teachers.

Additional results from the secondary research activities found that BME staff remained significantly under-represented in more senior positions in both the academic and professional/support staff workforces of all other public sector organisations. Evidence also suggested that the issue of covert racism is one of the more prevalent aspects of racism now acting as barriers to BME progression in other public sectors.

5.7 BME Staff Identity

Some BME managers who did acquire leadership positions felt particularly stressed by the 'break' from BME peers and felt pressure to conform from white managerial peers.

"It felt like I had been thrown out of the fold.....some of my Black colleagues gave me a harder time than the white staff.....I didn't know whether I was one of them or one of 'us' anymore. It was a hard transition"

5.8 A BME Leadership and Management Style

Findings from the documentary analysis suggest that traditional leadership paradigms and models often categorise the leadership styles of managers. Given that all of the studies of leadership styles are based on Euro-centric models, there is an organisational cultural bias in favour of those leadership styles that are consistent with traditional Western values. Bordas (2007) highlighted this when she stated;

"Today's leadership models, although they may differ from person to person and method to method, generally have a common bias toward Western- or European-influenced ways of thinking,..... Contemporary leadership theories exclude the enormous contributions, potential learning, and valuable insights that come from leaders in diverse communities." (pg ix)

Deane (2003) suggested that one of the reasons that BME leaders are so few in number is because of the lack of recognition that BME staff might approach leadership in a less traditional or 'Euro-centric' way. This is in turn interpreted by recruitment and selection decision makers as BME staff not

demonstrating the perceived leadership attributes that are required for the sector. This point is reflected in a comment made by a respondent from the 2008 survey reflects this viewpoint:

"I believe the college management team only recruit people who look like them and act like them, usually through the grapevine. Any senior manager appointed outside of this method does not last. We have never had a BME senior manager." (First-line manager, Greater London, 2008)

A range of responses obtained during the interviews and focus groups demonstrates that BME staff, as well as other FE staff, almost all agree with the view that leadership strategies and styles adopted by BME leaders are sometimes different;

"I have found that Black managers tend to focus their leadership tasks on more operational issues. In my experience, many who I have interviewed seem to find it difficult to project themselves into strategic leadership roles. I think this has something to do with the leadership development programmes we currently offer. Of course it may also have something to do with college and indeed sector expectations, but this to me is a clear mismatch that I don't necessarily think is a 'race' issue" (PW, White Senior Manager, 2009)

"As a manager, I always wore my heart on my sleeve. I was happy with that approach and I found staff responded well to this style. They particularly appreciated my honesty" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

"....you can't be honestyou set yourself up to fail" (North Focus Group, 2009)

"I was told by one colleague, who was also a Course Manager, that I should stop working so hard as they would expect that from all of us. That really threw me and reminded me of being at school and having to hide my cleverness to avoid being bullied" (London Focus Group, 2009)

I think we're more in tune with others' emotions.....English people are still into the stiff upper lip stuff.....that's the kind of leaders they want...not up front and personal people like us...we'll never fit" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

"In all honesty, I don't know if I would want to be like them anyway. And I'm not going to change into being two-faced and hard-nosed just to go up the ladder" (North Focus Group, 2009)

".....most certainly we have a very distinct way of leading others. In my view this is based on a number of factors based on our historical experience, our heritage and culture. We come from a background and experience of dealing with oppression, inequality and overcoming struggles and breaking down barriers. Of course we will lead differently, but in my view these qualities are nothing but positive and it is exactly what our institutions need in this current climate" (CH, BME Senior Manager, 2009)

"I think there is a difference...we know it's (leadership styles) different in the way women lead, so clearly there is also going to be a case for ethnicity and culture" (PW, White Senior Manager, 2009)

These quotations illustrate the challenges facing BME leaders and indeed the next generation of BME leaders who have to consciously or unconsciously decide what kind of approaches they adopt when in senior management positions. These comments make a compelling case for not only leadership development approached in the FE sector, but leadership theorists on the whole, to re-examine, augment and in some cases re-develop current approaches to the way we research and study leadership traits and styles. In many ways, the statements raise more questions than answers about the way we approach training our future leaders. They indicate that there is a real need for further research that will systematically examine particular qualities amongst BME communities which might lead to the identification of a different leadership style. They also introduce questions about whether any identified BME leadership styles can then act as barriers to progression for BME staff in the FE sector.

A few respondents did not agree that different leadership and management approaches acted as a barrier to BME staff progression into leadership positions, but they were again white respondents in management positions:

"There may be something in it, but I don't believe that this can be assessed during an interview process, so in that sense, it shouldn't have an impact on selection processes and therefore their (BME staff) progression" (SD, White Senior Manager)"

Other findings from the research undertaken for this study indicate that some BME staff believe that they did not 'fit' in to the college because of their cultural lifestyle, their expression of ethnicity and their past experiences. These comments reflect the experiences of some BME professionals in terms of their personal perceptions of how they are expected to lead and carry themselves at work. It highlights the complexity of researching barriers to leadership progression and suggests that some other factors identified warrant further investigation.

5.9 Attrition Rates, Retention and Future Employment Patterns

As indicated earlier the term 'attrition' is used to describe the process of large numbers of employees leaving over a certain period of time. Staff workforce data available for FE recorded the attrition rate for BME staff and the NBP research report (2005b) suggested that there was a higher rate of attrition of BME college managers from FE than their white counterparts. The analysis of the latest LSS workforce data demonstrated that there was only a slight drop in the number of BME professionals staying in the sector (LLUK, 2009b). The largest fall of BME staff was in the Greater London region which paradoxically has the highest number of BME students:

"Greater London had the highest percentage of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff (43.9% of the BME teaching workforce) but has seen one of the largest falls (of almost one percentage points) since 2007-2008." (p6)

Although the current recorded drop in the number of BME staff in FE is marginal, this is one area that does need to be monitored. This is due to the fact the BME student population is increasing and there is a case for arguing that the long-term impact of this trend will not be of benefit to learners or to the sector as a whole. Many respondents from the 2008 survey made comments about the issue of retention and attrition rates of BME staff:

"Recruitment success has been more by luck than planning because of our location in a very multicultural city. Retention statistics are not so favourable." (HR Director, Greater London, 2008)

"We have been successful in attracting BME teachers and support staff (overall percentage increasing steadily over past 5 years) but less successful with managers." (HR Director, North West, 2008)

"BME applications have risen by 10% between 2001 and 2007 and BME employees have risen from 9.2% to 14% over same period., however we still do not have BME senior manager in post". (HR Director, Greater London, 2008)

These sentiments were echoed by equally responsive focus group participants and interviewees, a small sample of which is included below:

"I had no choice but to move on...but in reality I was pushed out. When the case got to the Tribunal and it looked like I might win a case for racism, they gave me an offer of settlement including a reference that I decided to take. I was told that things were going to get rough for me by a white colleague and this was a year before they started to make life really difficult for me. I'd started to become too challenging.....it is very difficult to carry on under these circumstance. The stress can affect your family life as well as your professional life and you have to make hard decisions. In my view, some battles are not worth continuing to fight". (CH, BME Middle Manager Interviewee, 2009)

"After being unsuccessful for four internal promotion opportunities where I was consistently being told that I was 'appointable, but the other candidate had more experience', I decided to take a secondment to broaden my experience. When I went for another promotion opportunity whilst still on secondment, the feedback changed to the fact that I was now too 'strategic thinking' and they needed somebody who was going to more operational. Got the message then and accepted an offer of redundancy even though my substantive post was still there....they couldn't wait to see the back of me. I'd like to think that things have changed now but am enjoying working for myself and have no plans to go back to colleges" (Focus Group, London, 2009).

"I won't even waste my time going for any more promotions...I am more qualified than all of them and am just waiting for the right opportunity and I'm getting out. I still like the work but they have a long way to go .. I'm looking for something in a bank or other private sector. They are more concerned with making a profit and are more likely to take you on because of how you perform rather than what you look like" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

The following case study illustrates a range of issues experienced by somebody who prematurely left the FE sector. It goes some way to demonstrate the range of cumulative incidents that can lead to good BME

staff in the FE sector choosing other career paths. Hazels' story describes the experience of one BME member of staff who progressed to middle management level before leaving the sector.

Figure 16: Life History Case Study C – Attrition

HAZEL'S STORY

Hazel started her career in the GLC and then trained as a secondary school teacher. She joined the FE sector in 1993 as a Business and IT lecturer. Although teaching was her passion, she chose to take the step into management and progressed to a Head of School role in the year 2000. It was in this role that she realised that at times, it felt like 'working in another organisation'. She noted numerous and varied situations where incidents occurred and decisions were made that were clearly influenced by the fact that *'other staff and management viewed me not as a manager who happened to come from a BME background, but as a BME manager'*. Examples of incidents included being told that she supported the development of *'too many Black staff'* when in fact she believed she supported all staff, with an emphasis on encouraging those who had not had opportunities before to undertake CPD and other college wide activities to broaden their experience. This invariably led to more BME staff acquiring promotions, thus changing the diversity profile both within and outside of the areas she managed.

Another incident, which ended up with her having to take her college through a grievance and complaints process, involved her being accused of bullying a member of staff by inviting another Black manager to sit in as she held an initial meeting with a member of staff about their performance. The member of staff had assumed that the other Black Manager was not in a management position and perceived this as a threat, due to the fact that he had never encountered a situation where two Black managers were in a meeting of this nature before. The college rather than taking steps to investigate the situation fully also assumed that the other Black Manager was not a member of staff and was somebody that Hazel had brought in from outside of the college. By the time the facts had emerged, and due to the speed of which rumours can spread within institutions such as FE colleges, the damage to Hazel's reputation had been done.

The reason for this type of institutional behaviour became more apparent when she started to apply for Assistant and Vice-Principal positions. On too many occasions the feedback she received, in her view, was not honest. Following the third time she was told that she was appointable but not able to demonstrate enough strategic level thinking, she decided to leave her post on an 18 month secondment basis, where she developed this experience. When she attempted to return to her substantive position she was told that she would no longer fit into the organisation in her current role as she was now not able to demonstrate the 'will' to undertake operational requirements that were needed at her level. Feeling disillusioned and let down by a system and sector she had such passion for, she left to become an independent trainer and consultant and now works with a range of colleges and providers supporting them with developing equality and diversity and teaching and learning improvement strategies. She would love to return to a full time position in a college, but in her words, still feels that *'colleges have a long way to go'*.

5.10 Intersectionality and Barriers to BME Staff Progression

This section covers a range of issues found during the research activities which demonstrates that in many contexts, BME professionals are faced with multiple inequalities. Factors that were found at times to act as multiple discriminatory barriers include issues around gender, language and dialect, disability, sexual orientation, age, faith and regional location.

5.10.1 Gender

Barnett, Deane and Gittens (2008) based their findings around the issue of gender and leadership in FE on the Women's Leadership Network report (2007) which explored gender-related enablers and barriers to career progression in the sector. Though concluding that women in FE are well represented in education management positions compared with the national picture, the report calls for more detailed consideration to be given to the still significant 'glass ceiling' effect within senior management and governing bodies. The WLN research reveals the under-representation of female BME managers and recommends that;

"Given the severe under-representation of BME managers at senior levels, it is recommended that succession management strategies ... should include a focus on ethnic minority middle managers, taking account of other equalities dimensions, including gender". (CEL, 2007, p57)

Some of the respondents in the interviews conducted for the WLN research believed their gender acted as an additional obstacle to their leadership progression;

"As a black female professional, it is difficult sometimes to distinguish the barriers I face as to whether they are because I am black or a black woman. I think men have a harder time when it comes to ethnicity and racism in the sector, but we all as black women have many a story to tell about our progression being blocked." (CEL, 2007, p47)

In their examination of women leaders, Barnett, Deane and Gittens also refer to '*Different Women, Different Places*' (Campayne and Jantuah, 2007) who explored the careers and professional lives of BME women leaders across all

public and private sectors. In the executive summary¹², Campayne and Jantuah found that two-thirds of the women who took part in the study believed that 'race' and gender influenced how they were perceived. They concluded that;

"While it is often said that women come up against a glass ceiling preventing them from rising through the ranks, for BME women that ceiling could be said to be 'a glass ceiling reinforced by concrete', reflecting the greater difficulty for them to make it into the top echelons of organisations, especially without compromising who they are." (p4)

One participant in a focus group summarised the many comments made about the issue of being a BME female professional in the sector;

"It's always difficult to say what the issue is exactly when racism rears its ugly head. I never really feel that it is because I am a Black woman that barriers are placed in my way. I always think it is essentially a BME thing. It could be that coming from a BME background as well as having the added complications of other domestic responsibilities that men don't have, like being a mother, could add to any negative perceptions that the college may have of my leadership capabilities, but how can I tell?" (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

Although fewer comments were recorded about issues faced by BME men, one male participant in the same focus group identified the discriminatory dimension of being a BME professional in the sector;

"There is a definite perception of Black men, teachers and managers working in the sector.....there is a lack of respect towards BME male professionals (Midland Focus Group, 2009)

5.10.2 Language, dialect and culture

Some of the issues around language, dialect and culture were specifically identified and there was some evidence to suggest that this issue was sometimes overlooked in terms of assessing BME candidates' suitability for promotion;

¹² <http://www.katalytik.co.uk/resources/DWDP+Executive+Summary.pdf>

"From my experience of BME teachers and managers, I have found them to have more commitment to promoting E & D (Equality and Diversity) as they have struggled to get to where they have. A significant number are bilingual or multilingual and understand the community – skills which are overlooked in the selection process." (Senior Manager, South-West, 2008)

Language and culture were also found to be acting as a barrier in terms of progression opportunities:

"Cultural barriers in terms of behavioural expectations at interview language barriers – not necessarily about the ability to speak competent English, but sometimes about the use of a specific word that has a particular value set in one culture and a different one in another. This impacts on the narrative in application forms too and how they are interpreted." (Senior Manager, South East, 2008)

5.11 Other Themes

Other findings also acknowledged a range of additional issues and themes that had an impact on BME leadership progression. When managers were asked about their perceptions of equality of access to promotion opportunities and whether BME staff had the same access to promotion as their white peers, more than half (55%) said 'yes' with 18 per cent saying no. More than a quarter (27%) did not respond to the question.

Those who were asked this question as part of the 2008 survey and who do not think that BME staff have the same access to promotion as their white peers, identified the barriers to their promotion as:

"Lack of confidence, fluency of spoken English." (Middle Manager, South West, 2008)

"Some interview processes." (Middle Manager, North West, 2008)

"Assumptions held by others." (Senior Manager, South East, 2008)

"Lack of training opportunities for BME staff. This college has never encouraged staff to attend First Steps to Leadership." (First-line Manager, Greater London, 2008)

"Principal and managers do not recognise that importance of a diverse workforce and tend to employ from their networks." (Senior Manager, South West, 2008)

"I think BME staff are more scrutinised, are better qualified and more experienced, but despite this we tend to face automatic categorisation and marginalisation." (Middle Manager, North West, 2008)

"It varies from individual to individual. Can be confidence, non-recognition of skills, not fitting in to a white management structure, but I think this is a class thing too." (Middle Manager, Greater London, 2008)

This suggests that there is awareness within the sector that the barriers to BME progression are complex and caused by a range of multi-discriminatory factors, a theme that was clearly identified following the activities undertaken for this thesis.

5.12 Breaking Down Barriers

When asked what could be done to break down the range of barriers to BME progression that were highlighted in themes identified from the review, those responding to the Barnett, Deane and Gittens survey and those who were interviewed and who attended the focus groups in the 2009 activities, responded with an array of suggestions. The comments made demonstrate that FE sector staff are able to articulate a range of strategies and activities that will address the issue of barriers to progression for BME staff;

"Active recruitment and challenging prejudice." (Senior Manager, South East, 2008)

"Become more trained in dealing with the issues." (Middle Manager, Greater London, 2008)

"Better understanding of the needs of BME applicants and providing appropriate support prior and during the application process." (Director, South East, 2008)

"Leading by personal example and championing talented BME staff." (Senior Manager, Greater London, 2008)

"Talk about the issues to colleagues. Being a mentor has been an amazing development process for me and I would recommend this to others." (Middle Manager, South East, 2008)

"Encourage and develop staff, validate good work, set aspirational targets." (Middle Manager, Greater London, 2008)

"...establish clear paths of promotion. Advertise positive outcomes and success stories internally and externally." (Middle manager, South West, 2008)

"I think having free training and development for BME staff is excellent. Many non-BME staff would benefit from specific training too. Embed equality and diversity best practice in all training and development – e.g. teacher training, management qualifications etc." (Senior Manager, South East, 2008)

"An acknowledgement that it is not just about processes and behaviours. Attitudes need to be challenged more and dealt with. Senior managers need more training on managing diversity with an emphasis on informal behaviours and attitudes that affect recruitment and selection decision-making." (First-line Manager, Greater London, 2008)

"Set targets with a narrative (vision) that is monitored and held up to account by the Unions or like body." (Middle Manager, North West, 2008)

"Continued promotion of BME role models and keep the agenda to the front of priority lists." (Senior Manager, Greater London, 2008)

"Ensuring that the employer has a positive profile in the community." (Director, South East, 2008)

"Less tolerance to lack of progression by inspectors." (Middle Manager, South West, 2008)

"More Black principals would be a visible sign of progress and act as an exemplar." (Senior Manager, South East, 2008)

"Targeted recruitment measures. Analysis and re-working of application processes to pinpoint areas that put people off and enable understanding of and confidence in the process." (Senior Manager, Greater London, 2008)

"There should be greater emphasis on Equality and Diversity in the Centre for Excellence's training, particularly in management and leadership programmes." (Middle Manager, North West, 2008)

Figure 17: College Case Study (College Alpha) – Breaking down barriers

COLLEGE CASE STUDY EXAMPLE – COLLEGE ALPHA

When the first Black Principal in the UK was appointed at Alpha College, the college culture changed within 3 years where Equality and Diversity and BME staff progression issues became embedded into every day practices. When interviewed, the principal stated;

“The college has a saying which is ‘Quality brings about equality and equality that brings about quality’.....when I was appointed, my vision was to make a college where all students and staff felt like they belonged there and felt safe”

He believed that this was achieved by developing and implementing strategies that ensured that *“... the staff and student populations reflected its local community in terms of its ethnic make-up”*. He also stated;

“..... our staff and the workforce should reflect our community across all job roles and at all levels, so if we are underrepresented in respect of black and minority ethnic teaching staff and managers, we are not meeting this aim. Research shows us that it is important for students to have role models from their own communities to whom they can relate and who can inspire them to achieve.”

The principal strongly believed that in order to achieve this; *“...you have to start at the top and have the commitment and drive with demonstrated examples coming from the board of governors and the senior management team”*.

It was interesting to note that BME staff from Alpha College who attended the focus group which was held in the North did not recognise the examples of barriers to progression that others in the group were sharing. The following statements exemplify their positive experiences and beliefs.

“Skin isn’t an issue as far as my knowledge and experience takes me.”

“I have always been treated fairly.”

“I have never been treated unfairly or know anyone in my college who has been treated differently because of their colour.”

“The college has open and fair policies, which are used impartially. As a manager I have to practice these policies and have been on the receiving end.”

“I had to think again about any decisions that could have been made due to my racial origins.”

(North West Focus group 2009)

The above case study demonstrates a number of examples of effective practice and shows that some BME staff do not experience barriers to their leadership progression and do not feel disadvantaged as a staff group in the sector. It was interesting to note that these were all staff from the focus group held in the North West and were all located in Alpha College which, as

indicated in the case study, had the first UK college principal from a BME background who had held that role for 16 years. From the statements made by the principal, the college had developed an ethos, culture and values that embedded Equality and diversity (E&D) practices into its strategic vision and direction. This is evidence of what can be achieved when an organisational culture that understands and embraces the issue of breaking down barriers to progression for BME staff has been developed and embedded in an institution. Some would argue that this is due to the fact that the principal is from a BME background, However, it could be argued that this is also the result of good leadership qualities and strategies.

5.13 Summary of Findings

This chapter has provided an analysis of the findings from the secondary and primary research activities and has included many direct quotations from respondents in order to elucidate the depth of the feelings, experiences and life histories of the respondents who took part in the study. This reflects one of my research intentions in that my work urges and encourages BME staff to share and recount their stories. The evidence reaffirms my initial view that the sector needs to continually explore the reasons for the lack of BME representation at leadership level. In order to do this I believe we have to allow the voices of those concerned to be heard in their own words.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This report has begun to examine the leadership challenges of succession planning and ethnic diversification of FE and sixth form colleges in the post-16 sector in the UK. It focuses on leadership representation and the lack of BME staff as well as highlighting the shortcomings of the sector in terms of addressing this inequality. It provides a rich set of data directly from the voices of research participants which exemplify some of the various issues FE and sixth form colleges need to address in terms of the experiences of BME professionals. It raises a series of complex but significant factors that are having an impact on the progression of BME staff.

In this final chapter I present a conclusion to the examination, findings and analysis of my study and firstly discuss how it relates to the theory and professional practice of leadership development and succession planning activities for BME staff. I consider the importance of incorporating an academic discourse around the theory of 'race' and racism into the practice and application of leadership development and succession planning of BME professionals.

In particular, I highlight the need for sector leaders and decision-makers to re-assess the manner in which they approach college management practices and organisational culture change. It is clear that leaders at all levels of management hierarchies need to be more fully informed and trained in order to understand the concepts of micro-politics, positive action, institutional racism and 'race' in relation to leadership theories and practice. I suggest that if people really understood these concepts and were supported in their leadership application and practices to fully engage with them, then a different culture could start to be embedded in individual organisations and indeed in the FE sector as a whole.

In the next section of the chapter, I pull together the findings from the research activities and attempt to provide a summary response to each of the research questions:

- What impact have succession management strategies and initiatives between 2002 and 2009 had on the progression of BME staff in FE ?
- What are the current progression barriers and facilitators facing BME staff in FE?
- How might FE institutions internally address equality and diversity issues in relation to the progression of BME staff?

I then present a set of recommendations and follow this with suggestions for further research. I conclude by discussing my plans to disseminate the findings from my thesis and then finally present an examination of the impact undertaking this research has had on my own professional practice.

6.2 Leadership and 'Race' Theory - Acknowledging the BME Leadership Style

This study has discussed the theories and discourses related to 'race', racism, micro-politics and institutional racism and asserts the need to re-evaluate the concept of 'race' and racism in examining leadership progression and diversity. The underlying paradigms for action relate to a range of behavioural theories of the concept of 'race' and racism that are relatively new to the UK. Many of the references are attributed to American studies where this discourse is much more widely debated. The research demonstrates that in the UK leadership has been studied mainly from the perspective of traditional leadership theories and on the experiences of white men and more recently white women. As a result of this line of discourse, there is a lack of understanding of how social, cultural and racial identities as well as power dynamics interact with BME leadership.

I have found Critical Race Theory (CRT) a very useful framework for studying the complexities around the experiences of BME professionals and leaders in predominantly white organisations. I conclude that there is a clear need for more investigative research and theorising to explain the marginalised status of BME leaders in FE.

The research findings and analysis demonstrate that some leaders and BME staff believe that 'race' should not and does not make a difference to BME progression. This would explain why BME experiences, though expressed and documented, are not being used to examine and inform different approaches to leadership development and progression. Although barriers to BME leadership progression have been acknowledged, these are only being tackled where those barriers are of an overt nature.

There is still a view from many quarters that it is only overt discriminatory behaviours that are seen as institutional racism and a colour blind approach to strategies and policy appears to justify no action. The evidence points to the fact that the micropolitical behaviours in an organisation constitute discrimination and this insidious and highly damaging form of institutional racism is not being tackled.

Perhaps the most significant finding is the paucity of literature and research on the application of diverse leadership styles and theories. It is not new to suggest that leadership theory as created by the dominant group may reflect the interest of that group. However, this research has demonstrated that this critique continues to be ignored. The systematic literature review found very few studies with explicit reference to BME leadership styles or even a range of characteristics that could constitute a BME leadership style.

My personal experience, supported by the majority of the findings from this research, demonstrates that BME leaders do manage and lead differently. Culturally and traditionally, BME communities are grounded in values such as the importance of extended family networks and spiritual beliefs. Evidence shows that BME communities and individuals are resilient, supportive, willing

to take risks, interdependent and collaborative. I assert that these are necessary qualities that are based largely on the historical, social experiences and survival strategies required to progress as a minority ethnic person in UK society. The suggestion that the 'BME leadership style' is more suited to the current leadership culture of FE organisations but is being stifled by the European dominated leadership values is an interesting one and warrants further research and discussion.

A high level of internal and external pressure is needed to encourage a more strategic and systematic approach to engaging in these 'new' discussions and agendas to embed them in the theorising of leadership development, policy and practice.

6.3 Returning to the Research Questions

6.3.1 What impact have succession management strategies and initiatives between 2002 and 2009 had on the progression of BME staff in FE?

Despite the initiatives that have been put in place to address the under-representation of BME staff in management and leadership roles in FE this study suggests that the number of BME staff in leadership positions do not reflect either the demographic makeup of the UK or the staff or student body in FE.

Many BME staff stated that they are confronted with a significant number and wide range of barriers to their professional progression. This has resulted in the position of BME staff remaining substantially unchanged. Although the majority of organisations represented in the research had invested in strategies and initiatives to address the under-representation of BME leaders, a substantial number of FE leaders are not informed about positive action, misunderstand the concept and view it as positive discrimination. The numbers of BME staff in senior management positions has remained depressingly low.

6.3.2 What are the current progression barriers and facilitators facing BME staff in FE?

The systematic analysis which examined documentation and literature pertaining to the impact that previous studies and initiatives have had on this issue highlighted the barriers that continue to impede the progress of BME staff into leadership positions. A range of barriers were identified:

- FE institutions not taking a strategic approach to succession planning with internal unplanned activities involving the use of networks and other informal recruitment processes which can result in discriminatory practices;
- A colour blind approach to the study of leadership and leadership development approaches;
- Internal micropolitical structures and individual behaviours that have a negative impact on BME professionals
- A lack of awareness and willingness to engage with the negative experiences of BME professionals;
- Considerable confusion and misunderstanding about the purpose and justification of positive action;
- A significant 'glass ceiling' effect in FE within senior management and governing bodies which is more pronounced with BME women professionals.
- Lack of recognition of the relevance and appropriateness of multicultural leadership styles

In terms of facilitators to BME staff progression it was found that the sector did place a high degree of emphasis on equality. Many FE stakeholders, institutions and senior leaders promoted policies to improve leadership diversity and representation through supporting BME staff to engage with positive action programmes, advertising in a manner that encourages applicants from BME backgrounds and commissioning research and reports into the issue. BME staff who had attended positive action programmes all commented on the strong impact it had had on their confidence, self development and effectiveness as FE professionals.

The results from the primary research undertaken in 2009 echo all of the above findings in terms of barriers and facilitators. However, it found that it is now the internal institutional structures that largely affect progression outcomes. Where BME staff had received support internally it was found that it could be sufficient to facilitate their progression.

6.3.3 How might FE institutions internally address equality and diversity issues in relation to the progression of BME staff?

The barriers that have been outlined above are not all new to FE. What is new, however, is the suggestion that many people who claim to be supporting the agenda for BME progression are not really signed up because they have not honestly examined their own understanding and position about 'race' and racism. Based on my own experience this is not a surprising revelation, as many of the approaches, ideas and even the mindset that FE practitioners have around leadership and diversity issues generally, have been driven by external policy makers. I have attended many training programmes, conferences and seminars, both internal and external to FE organisations that I have worked in, and none of these has given me the opportunity to examine any theories of 'race' or diversity in terms of how I fundamentally understood or personally viewed the issues. It is, therefore, not only the case that FE institutions need to internally address equality and diversity issues, it is also important that we go back to basics and individually address our own internal issues.

Therefore, the main answer to this research question has to be that FE institutions need to take a different approach to an understanding of the whole diversity agenda. As well as the issue of 'race' awareness and the progression of BME (and indeed other marginalised) staff, our colleges, providers and stakeholders must ensure that this approach, which could be based on a practical application of Critical Race Theory, is first understood by senior managers, and then disseminated and cascaded through training and other initiatives. To ensure that this is taken seriously, it will be important for college-wide training strategies and policies to be appropriately publicised

and communicated and then measured for impact, through systemic mechanisms, such as monitoring processes.

As well as taking on board this structural approach, institutions need to strongly encourage individual members of staff to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) programmes that include an element of examining self, in terms of personal understanding and practice of 'race' issues. This personal examination has to take place for all the stakeholders involved in FE, as well as those from a BME background, since it will be the fundamental basis of any sustainable structural and organisational cultural changes.

This can be achieved, but it will take time, and it will mean that those who are in the position will have to take steps to create and change policies around human resource planning, staff training and development. This might include looking at staff induction processes, reviewing internal training policies and ensuring that they inform external leadership training and development content and other sector-run leadership programmes.

FE institutions should also review their organisational communication structures and ensure that there is an acknowledgement that micro-political behaviour can and does have an effect on their decision-making processes. Micro-politics has to be recognised as belonging with any discussions about institutional discriminatory practices, and this message should be communicated and publicised so that all staff are aware that these practices will be observed and monitored, particularly in terms of their impact on the progression of BME staff.

And, most importantly, we must encourage the engagement of a more honest and open dialogue where those who are experiencing barriers to their progression are heard and listened to. This could, for example, be achieved through adopting a process of regular staff focus groups with senior managers and college governors.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Introduction

I recognise the challenge of providing a set of recommendations to a sector that understands the need to address the lack of BME representation at leadership level very well, and which has appeared to have tried a range of initiatives and strategies. This study suggests a range of recommendations. However, it is clear that there are deeper issues that cannot be addressed by the further embedding of structural systems and initiatives. The findings from the primary research activities conducted for this study demonstrate some of these more deep-rooted issues. The five recommendations offered below are based on the fact that previous and current strategies to address the succession crisis by breaking down the barriers to BME progression have not and are not working quickly enough.

6.4.2 Recommendation 1 - Succession Management Strategies

I recommend that all FE colleges and institutions should develop succession management strategies that are published and that include clear plans of how they intend to address the issue of BME staff representation. These plans will form part of their Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments (EDIA's) and should therefore be subject to the monitoring processes that the impact assessments of all institutions in the public sector have to adhere to. The bodies responsible for monitoring the performance against the plan should be the funding bodies. Ideally, some allocation of funding should be attached to this performance indicator as this will have the effect of raising the strategic importance of the issue, although I do acknowledge that this will be a challenge given the current political and economic climate.

6.4.3 Recommendation 2 – Governors' Profile

The lack of BME representation at governor and board level for organisations in FE has been identified as a key factor in terms of the selection of senior staff in the sector. For this reason, I would recommend that the sector should consider bringing in affirmative action policies and initiatives for a fixed period of time, in order to begin the process of addressing the issue of BME representation.

6.4.4 Recommendation 3 – Senior Management Team Profiles and Selection and Recruitment Processes

This thesis has demonstrated that the same issue of lack of representation exists at senior management level in FE. Given the importance and indeed the acknowledgement that we must address this issue urgently, I recommend that the same system of affirmative action be introduced for all senior management vacancies for a fixed period of time. I would recommend that the sector should consider allowing shortlists to contain a quota of 50 per cent of suitable candidates from a BME background. This policy should be widely communicated and publicised so that BME professionals can see the importance the sector is placing on addressing this issue and thus give them the confidence and motivation to apply for vacancies. This will have the added effect of not only addressing the numbers to better reflect the ethnic make-up of the student population and balance the representation of senior teams, but will also begin the crucial process of tackling the internal culture in our institutions.

6.4.5 Recommendation 4 - Training and Development

Access to positive action initiatives and training programmes in leadership development should be made available to all BME staff. Evidence has demonstrated that not all BME professionals will necessarily attend positive action activities. However this should continue to be made available to them so that the opportunity of '*levelling of the playing field*' can be taken advantage of by all. Where providers only have a small number of BME staff, they should ensure that those staff are fully supported to attend externally run positive action courses.

6.4.6 Recommendation 5 - Sector Leadership Programmes

All sector leadership programmes, run by government funded organisations responsible for improving quality in the sector, should include an element or embedding of elements which allow for the raising of awareness and understanding of the BME experience, cultural awareness and theories of 'race' including critical race theory (CRT). At present, areas that have to be embedded in all programmes delivered by the sector quality improvement agency (Learning and Skills Improvement Service) include leadership methods and styles, equality and diversity and e-learning. This demonstrates that these requirements can be and are introduced if the motivation and governmental driver is there.

Over the past decade, Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars in education have produced a significant body of work theorising the impact of 'race' and racism in education. It is time that this is now adopted in the field of leadership. By linking theories of 'race' and CRT to everyday practices in our organisations, sector leaders and managers will understand how this development is relevant to a range of timely FE topics including the areas of equality and diversity, community cohesion and positive action.

The study of multicultural leadership styles should also form part of the current leadership style modules that exists in most leadership and management programmes.

Adopting this recommendation will take the issue of leadership development training to a different level. In terms of supporting the progression of BME staff agenda it moves the debate from the identification of barriers to progression to the domain of taking action to change the status quo. Adopting such an approach to leadership development will have the added impact of beginning to change the culture from within.

6.5 Future Research

6.5.1 Introduction

One of the main things that I recognised whilst undertaking the interviews and focus groups for this study, were the numerous comments made by BME staff, many off the record and un-recorded, which indicated their fatigue and frustration with being asked to yet again report their experiences of working in FE. As indicated earlier, there have been a number of national LSS surveys and studies conducted since the publication of the Commission for Black staff Report (2002). All these studies and surveys have demonstrated repeatedly that institutional racism and other barriers still exist in FE and are having a negative impact on the progression of BME professionals into leadership positions. This is a reality and one that has been clearly evidenced, but to date very little has changed. In recognising the need for further research, and offering the following seven suggestions, this important factor has been taken into account.

6.5.2 'Why so long?' Research

BME staff do not need or want to be asked about their experiences again. The evidence is there. What we need to do now is to conduct investigations that will establish why things are taking so long to change, despite the initiatives that have been put in place. Further research activities are needed to establish how structurally and culturally as an FE community and as individual institutions, we can begin to sustainably change this status quo.

6.5.3 Longitudinal Research

It would be of use to the sector to conduct longitudinal research to indicate the impact of the positive action programmes they currently offer and have previously offered and to set up systems to capture this evidence for any future programmes. This would give a more accurate picture of how successful these programmes are in addressing the numbers of BME professionals acquiring senior leadership position within specific time frames.

6.5.4 Monitoring Sector Stakeholders for Impact

Further surveys will need to be carried out to establish how far the sector funding agencies will maintain steps towards achieving targets for the recruitment for BME managers. In terms of selection and recruitment, the sector has to ensure that the workforce diversity statistics continue to be recorded and monitored.

6.5.5 Researching Language and Dialect as a Barrier to Progression

Examples of staff with African or Asian accents being overlooked for promotion or not even being employed are reported in the findings. It was noted, however, that there was little evidence to substantiate this claim. For this reason it would be useful to conduct a small-scale survey, in order to establish any patterns that might inform this debate and to ascertain the impact language and dialect can have on career progression.

6.5.6 BME Disabled Staff Experiences Research

The analysis of studies that examined the position of women leaders in FE, and the multiple discriminatory factors that can act as barriers to their progression, demonstrates that further research is required in this area. It was also clear from the limited amount of literature available, that research is needed to explore the issue of disabled BME professionals and the barriers that exist to their leadership progression opportunities.

6.5.7 BME Staff Attrition Rates

In terms of the attrition rates and the retention of BME professional staff in FE, I suggest that research should be undertaken with a larger and more randomly selected sample to ascertain whether BME managers leave the sector due to racial discrimination and to consider whether or not BME managers are leaving at a higher rate than their white counterparts and other marginalised groups such as disabled and lesbian and gay staff.

6.5.8 Investigating the BME Leadership Style

My final suggestion for further research is related to interrogating the concept of a BME leadership style. This thesis has demonstrated clearly that further research has to be undertaken to explore the existence and influence of BME leadership styles, not only in FE, but potentially across all public and private sectors. In the context of this thesis, there are three key areas around this issue that I would suggest need to be investigated further.

The suggestion that the 'BME leadership style' is more suited to the current leadership culture of FE organisations, but is being stifled by white-European dominated leadership values, is an interesting one and warrants further research and discussion. Secondly, I consider that studies which explore the experience of marginalised BME leaders, who are at times challenged with working and leading in predominantly white-led organisations, are also needed to offer alternative theoretical paradigms to the study of leadership. Finally, it is important that research is undertaken to establish whether this notion of BME staff leading and managing with a particular BME leadership style is influencing leadership recruitment and selection decisions in FE.

6.6 Issues for my research and professional practice

I note at this point that even whilst conducting preliminary investigations as to whether the topic of this study would be feasible, the response from potential participants was very positive and people wanted to get involved. Together with the research approach I implemented and the subsequent results, I found that the research included adopting an emancipatory research model. Emancipatory research is quite complex, in that it is just as much a movement and belief as well as a research method. It comes from the standpoint and belief that all persons should have control of the decision-making processes that affect them as individuals. It is concerned with the dynamics of power and liberation in historical and political contexts. The emancipatory research process, changes research into a political activity and seeks to challenge and change inequalities among the oppressed, marginalised and vulnerable populations in society. This is where I would

argue this research has led to. I am also aware of the fact that emancipatory research has the potential to be politically controversial and this will certainly be the case for the study in hand.

Ethically, a crucial part of this investigation in terms of my professional practice is the issue of my position as a Black researcher working in the sector. As noted earlier in the research, the subject being investigated was sensitive and a heightened awareness of this was required and observed at all times. Ethical dilemmas and concerns arose at all stages of the research process. These centred on issues of responsibility, accountability, legality, sensitivity and confidentiality as well as the need to consider the impact of taking a CRT approach to the study.

As a BME researcher and senior LSS practitioner I am familiar with the challenges and necessity of situating myself in this type of discourse. I value my work and this particular study as being of paramount importance in my professional field as an equality and diversity trainer and adviser. My experience of working in the policy-making arena in education has shown me that research that has not been commissioned by the decision-makers is largely ignored. This means that unless the key policy- and decision-makers are already aware of and willing to discuss particular hypotheses or issues, the opportunity to open up wider discussions about any new approaches is limited. This is particularly the case when 'race' or diversity policies are involved, exemplifying the CRT concept of 'interest convergence', which was discussed earlier in this thesis.

6.7 Dissemination of the Findings

One of the main purposes of undertaking this study was to disseminate the findings and I always intended the research to provide information that could be used to inform decisions or policies that aim to create a culture shift in the behaviour or attitude of all college staff in terms of how BME professionals in FE are supported and viewed.

This indicates the need for active promotion of my thesis findings to the relevant parties, but I am aware of the resource and access constraints and limitations to this type of activity. It is clear that there are captive audiences waiting to hear the findings from this thesis. These include the research participants, BME colleagues and networks and those who attend the positive action programmes which I develop and deliver. All of these people will want to hear the key messages and this is one of the most obvious ways of getting the findings out there.

However, I am aware of the limitations of 'preaching to the converted' and despite there being a need for all involved in leadership development to hear these reports and recommendations, it is equally, if not more important that the messages are heard by those who can actually change things. Getting to those who would not normally read or engage in this agenda is the real challenge and implementing the effective dissemination of research findings requires significant resources, particularly if it is to be sustainable. Engaging the decision-makers can help inform decisions on programmes for funding, but these people have to first be educated themselves.

I am aware that any dissemination strategy will need to consider the levels of publication, circulation or communication of the information. Methods of possible dissemination, at the grass roots level, include my establishing a dialogue with the programme leads from mainstream FE leadership and management development projects in which I am involved. I recognise that this approach will need to take account of individual project leader attitudes and personal views about 'race' and BME leadership issues. Other factors to consider include how this learning might be embedded in the content of already established programmes.

Other conventional methods of dissemination I plan to do, include writing a summary report of the key findings and synopsis of my thesis and offer these for publication in relevant journals and academic and practitioner publications. I aim to revisit the findings and analysis and reframe its presentation in order to submit a book proposal to publishers, possibly

Continuum International Publishing Group as part of the 'The Essential FE Toolkit Series' and to Routledge Education. I also plan to publish journal articles and produce some 'think piece' bulletins for research forums and for the Learning and Skills Improvement Service as well exhibit my work at research and poster conferences.

6.8 And Finally

I acknowledge that as a BME researcher and practitioner using the approaches and methods outlined in this study, including the CRT framework, I needed to be continually reflective in my approach to completing this thesis. For this reason, I constantly examined and reflected on the internal and external drivers that were continually changing the context and having an impact on my ability to complete the thesis. As an experienced BME professional working in the sector and having first-hand experience of needing to deal with many of the issues that have been raised, I am disappointed that the efforts made to redress the issue of BME leadership progression have not been as successful as they should have been. As the need to address the succession crisis continues, specific barriers also continue to serve as challenges for FE. Because some of these barriers to BME staff progression are embedded in deep-rooted attitudes, traditions and norms, effective systemic changes require a great deal of effort, time and investment.

This research follows a succession of other reports that have examined barriers to the progression of BME staff in the FE sector. However, I have approached the findings and analysis from a different angle and with the intention of encouraging and stimulating a discourse around a theory of BME leadership issues based on the application of a CRT approach. My aim is to challenge the status quo and I believe, and as Lynham (2002)¹³ states, that *'without persistent inquiry of a problem, developing applicable theory will remain lacking'* (p12). The research was always intended to inspire a debate and the message in this thesis is intended to be challenging and thought-

¹³ Byrd, M (2009) Theorizing African American Women's Leadership Experiences: *Socio-Cultural Theoretical Alternatives Advancing Women in Leadership* online journal: [accessed 26/5/09]

provoking. I anticipate the responses, particularly in terms of the recommendations I have made, will reflect this.

In terms of my professional practice, I am involved in the development and delivery of a range of leadership programmes and projects for FE and in theory should be in the ideal position to initiate, first hand, some of the recommendations I have given. The irony, however, is that despite being an independent LSS professional consultant and leadership specialist, I am also from a BME background and therefore experience all the same barriers and obstacles to my own progress and opportunities to shine and excel, as the many BME colleagues I interviewed and communicated with, whilst undertaking this research.

As an academic researcher and professional practitioner, I strongly encourage the readers of this study to consider the challenges that have emerged, reflect on the issues raised in the context of their own professional and academic interest and, where possible, support the dissemination of these findings. I hope that this work will contribute to the development of a view of leadership development within FE that will focus on the changing of internal organisational cultures.

My vision of what I can contribute to the sector in terms of my professional practice is to be involved with the development of a leadership advancement framework for all levels of staff, which will include a greater awareness of and engagement with 'race' and leadership issues. Establishing a framework of this nature will create an effective and sustainable model for the delivery of leadership development programmes that will have a lasting impact on BME staff progression in FE. My vision of what I can contribute to the support of my BME colleagues is to build on my current professional practice and continue to communicate the key messages. My aim is to support my colleagues to be confident and determined in achieving leadership aspirations. I conclude this thesis by quoting the words of a poem by Labi Siffre (1987), which demonstrates this key message that I hold for all LSS BME professionals.

SOMETHING INSIDE SO STRONG

*The higher you build your barriers
The taller I become
The farther you take my rights away
The faster I will run
You can deny me
You can decide to turn your face away
No matter, cos there's....*

*Something inside so strong
I know that I can make it
Tho' you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone
Oh no, something inside so strong
Oh oh oh oh oh something inside so strong*

*The more you refuse to hear my voice
The louder I will sing
You hide behind walls of Jericho
Your lies will come tumbling
Deny my place in time
You squander wealth that's mine
My light will shine so brightly
It will blind you
Cos there's.....*

*Something inside so strong
I know that I can make it
Tho' you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone
Oh no, something inside so strong
Oh oh oh oh oh something inside so strong*

*Brothers and sisters
When they insist we're just not good enough
When we know better
Just look 'em in the eyes and say
I'm gonna do it anyway
I'm gonna do it anyway*

*Something inside so strong
And I know that I can make it
Tho' you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone
Oh no, something inside so strong
Oh oh oh oh oh something inside so strong"¹⁴*

¹⁴ Labi Siffre (1987) *Something Inside So Strong*: a song of defiance in the face of oppression and bigotry, a song of personal inner strength and more. Available at http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/l/labi_siffre/something_inside_so_strong.html [accessed 19/4/10]

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APPENDIX 1

CO-AUTHORS PERMISSION STATEMENT

**Succession Planning and Racial Equality in the Further Education System,
Published by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL). May 2008**

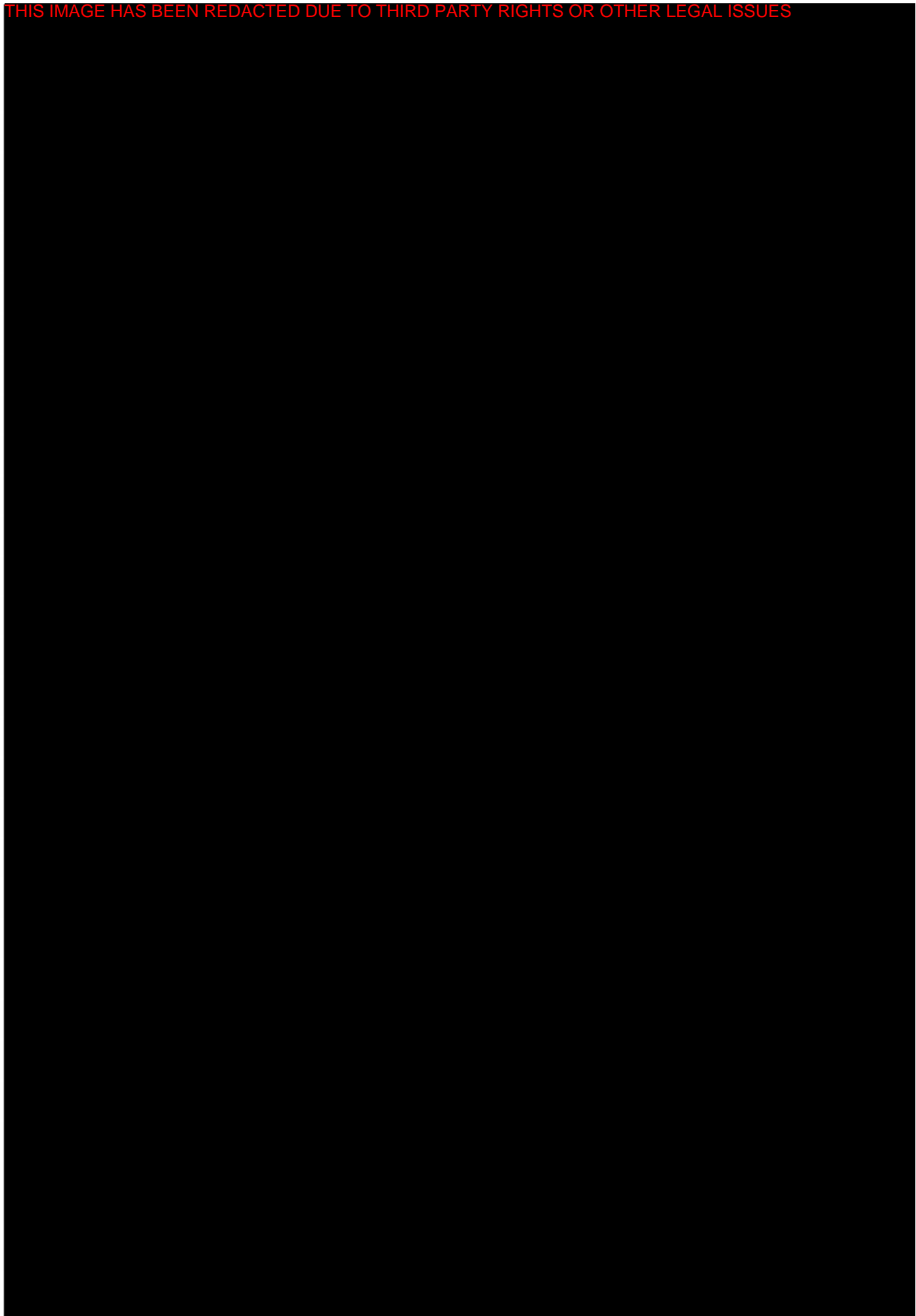
We confirm that that we co-authored the above research report which was commissioned for the Centre for Excellence in Leadership and completed by Phil Barnett Associates Ltd. The research was undertaken by a team of three associates including Helen Deane.

We further confirm that we have given permission for use of the project data to be used for the purposes of Helen's thesis only.

The data from the project should not be used for any other purposes without our agreement.

Dr Ian Gittens:  Dated: 25/01/2012

Phil Barnett:  Dated: 26/1/12



APPENDIX 3

FOCUS GROUP INVITATION (email/letter)

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Staff Progression in the Further Education (FE) Sector: 'FE Leading the Way' – six years on

The further education system is facing a succession challenge – many more staff are leaving and retiring than joining, thus jeopardizing the ability of the sector to continue meeting the needs of learners.

For my final thesis and as part of my doctorate which I am completing at the Institute of Education, I am currently undertaking independent research to investigate the current situation regarding BME staff progression in the sector, six years on from the Commission for Black Staff Report: Further Education Leading the Way which was published in October 2002.

As part of the research I would like to meet with a group of BME college staff to learn directly how working in FE has been for them, where (if at all) their ethnicity has acted as a barrier to progress and how colleges can do more to make themselves truly inclusive and supportive. I am interested in identifying success and good practice as well as in identifying problems and failure.

To this end I am holding a number focus groups where these issues can be discussed and explored in a totally confidential setting and invite you to participate in this research by attending a meeting which has been arranged for you at (to insert location day and time) If you are unable to join a focus groups but would like to contribute as an individual, please contact me at helen.deane@btinternet.com or on 07834 322158

Thanking you in advance for your time and support.

Helen Deane
Researcher

APPENDIX 4

Table 1: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER, ETHNICITY & MANAGEMENT TIER

Participant ID	GENDER		ETHNICITY		LEVEL			
	F	M	BME	White	Senior Tier 1 & 2	Middle Tier 3	MGL Tier 4	Senior FE CEO Stakeholder
MA	✓		✓		✓			
YA	✓		✓					✓
WB		✓	✓		✓			
DH		✓		✓				✓
PW	✓			✓	✓			
MK	✓			✓	✓			
CH	✓		✓			✓		
SD	✓			✓	✓			
TOTALS	6	2	4	4	5	1	0	2

KEY:

- Tier 1 & 2 Principal/ Senior Management/ Directors
- Tier 3 Middle Manager/ Head of School/Head of Department/Head of Service
- Tier 4 First Line Management/Programme Managers/Course Managers

Table 2: INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

ID	Biography
MA	Tier 2 manager in a general FE college. MA has worked in the sector for 18 years and has applied for 2 principal positions having held the post of vice-principal for the last 8 years.
YA	Assistant Director (Tier 2) of a of a key FE stakeholder organisation. YA is has held the position for two years and has a background in HR in the NHS and LA public sector organisations
WB	A retired principal who now acts as a consultant supporting interim executive roles in FE colleges. Before retirement WB had 25 years experience in FE.
DH	Chief Executive of a key FE stakeholder organisation who has held positions of chief executive positions in FE for 10 years
PW	A principal of a successful large general FE college in the North with a good reputation of supporting and promoting a range of internal diversity initiatives
MK	A vice-principal of a large London college having held the position for 9 years and with 19 years experience of working in FE
CH	A 3 rd tier manager in a large London general FE college. CH has had 21 years experience in FE colleges and has been actively applying for senior leadership positions for one year.
SD	A chief executive and principal of a large Midland College with 8 years experience of principalship in their current and other FE colleges

APPENDIX 5

Interviews Focus Group Response Template – (STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL for data analysis only)

Guidance

- The following template is to be use to capture all the data from the focus group or interview. Any thoughts analysis on how the process went as a whole have also been included
- Paraphrased comments are fine
- When going through notes/ recordings quotes which are particularly illustrative of a certain point are included in speech marks
- Points / comments have been attributed to whoever said it using their initials in the right hand column.
- Where there was group consensus about a point, this has been highlighted as 'consensus'.

Focus Group/Interview Number	
Focus Group/Interviewee (Initial)	
Date	
Venue	
Time	

1. Background

Participant details:

Name	Initials	Name	Initials

2. Overall experience of working in the sector

--	--

3. Experience of the recruitment and selection processes

--

4. Expectations when you took your role

--	--

5. View of the future for minority groups of staff

--	--

APPENDIX 6

Focus group/Interview – Key Questions and Issues

Question 1: What has your overall experience of working in the sector and in your college been like?

Prompts:

- Their experience of the sector and your college
- changes in their roles and responsibilities within FE;
- operation of HR recruitment and selection processes;
- systems and processes that advantage/disadvantage them as minority staff
- their job satisfaction and retention issues;
- their career progression opportunities/barriers - Opportunities/obstacles
- factors affording most/least job satisfaction
- ethnicity as a factor; positive or negative experiences

Question 2: What has been your experience of the recruitment and selection processes?

Prompts:

- The recruitment process
- How found out about the job
- Application and short listing process
- Interview
- How interview conducted any comments made
- Questions asked and any preconceptions perceived etc.
- How responses received etc.
- Selection decision; What do you think made you get or not get the job
- Experience of feedback - comments

Question 3: What were your expectations when you took on your role in terms of the kind of experience you thought you would have?

Prompts:

- What made you decide to work in the sector
- Expectations for career progression
- nature and reasons for any changes in expectations
- Likelihood of remaining in FE
- How they experienced the Induction process as preparation for the role
- Line Management experiences, communication with manager And other staff
- How realistic were your expectations and what impact on future career aspirations
- Expect to be working in FE in five years' time
- Potential areas for progression – in or out of the sector

Question 4: Tell me about your experiences around your CPD and any staff development issues

Prompts:

- Access to CPD/training opportunities, updating/learning new skills:
- Mentoring/coaching

Question 6: What is your view of the future for minority groups of staff in FE
Prompts: What would you recommend to your college?

INVITATION TO FOCUS GROUP (to be shared at the end of individual interviews)

'I will be running a focus group on *(date)* and would like to invite as many colleagues as possible to attend. I would be grateful if you could pass this information around via email or using the invitations *(copy attached)*'

APPENDIX 7

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide contains the list of topics and questions for discussion with focus group participants and interviewees.

To prepare for the interview/ focus group, I will need:

- Guide of structured questions to distribute to each participant.
- Digital Recorder (for focus groups only)

Timing

- Focus Group: The session should take approximately 1.5 hours. Allow 5-7 minutes for the introduction and 20 minutes per section for the remaining two sections.
- Interview: The interview will last about ½ hr

The discussion points will cover:

- Explanation of the background and process
- Introduction, say a little about the research, where the findings might go
- Experiences of BME staff working in FE colleges.
- part of a independent research project designed to determine how FE can develop its diversity and inclusion practices as a response to the succession challenge
- One of several group discussions being carried out with a range of college staff from different institutions.
- Say how long the session is expected to run.
- Ask participants to switch off mobile phones
- recording the discussion; confidentiality
- Length of discussion up to 1.5 hours (1/2 hr for interviews).
- Participants can ask for clarification at any time.

APPENDIX 8

SAMPLE INTERVIEW RESPONSE - THEMED

Comments made during XXXXXXXXXX Interview - XXXXXXXXXX

Overall Experience

- *"Pressure is on you to be better – there is an added responsibility. You have to be good at what you do....we're not there, I can't afford to be bad at what I do"*
- *"Lots of people get stuck quickly and at a fairly low level"*
- *"Can all talk the language....can celebrate in all sorts of ways"*
- *"Response to LDD has been fantastic and has given BME staff a lot of good starts"*

Recruitment & Selection

- *"Recruitment and selection is more to do with open policies and procedures not by positive action, but by an 'open approach'"*
- *"We do statistics, but don't take it any further. We need to look at resources and check how closely we link what we find in statistics, to what we do"*
- *"Targeted recruitment – time to research needed, so that we know where and how to target"*

Training and Development

- *"We have 7-days of staff development per staff member 07/08 inc cross college days..... more targeted training also needed"*
- *"We need a training & development scheme that will identify people who have an interest in the next move"*
- *"There can be an element of subjectivity when talent spotting.....but can we rely on this and not falling into the 'halo' method trap"*
- *"Identify skills gap – identify skills set of those who want to progress. Look at talent across the board. Avoid situations regarding the view of individual line managers"*

What the sector can do?

- *We need case studies and sample examples of what has worked.....help from CEL”*
- *“We need personalised packages for those who have been talent spotted”*
- *“Getting positive action across to managers across levels in the sector – it’s a development process, include these in programmes and modules. Everybody needs to understand difference between positive action and positive discrimination”*
- *“Engage with BME staff more explicitly... we haven’t talked about the issue a great deal”*
- *“Research a white cohort of managers to compare career progression”*
- *“Resourcing.....to support shadowing and mentoring opportunities”*
- *“Targets.....IIP (charter mark) process should be introduced”*
- *“Target governor level”*
- *“High Flier programme is a good idea but this is a high risk strategy*
- *“The question is do they really want us?”*
- *“Support BME progression networks”*

What can the Colleges do?

- *Can’t see anything further done structurally that has made a difference”*
- *“Most BME staff carry out their careers in urban inner city colleges. There are hidden attitudes – you become associated with particular agendas.....get boxed in”*
- *“We need to look at the role that non-multi-cultural colleges has to play actual offering work-shadowing activities”*
- *“Comments from Foster.....’lot more needs to be done.....we need to mobilise non-multicultural colleges ...even grade 1 or 2 colleges don’t do anything about it. Work on the ability of a college to provide a supportive environment for its staff - hand pick 1 or 2 colleges in each region who are prepared to have ago”*

APPENDIX 9

ETHNIC PROFILING (FULL AND GENERAL CLASSIFICATION)

FULL ETHNICITY CLASSIFICATION	GENERAL CLASSIFICATION
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	BME
Asian or Asian British – Indian	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	
Asian or Asian British – any other background	
Black or black British – African	
Black or black British – Caribbean	
Black or black British – any other black background	
Chinese	
Mixed – white and Asian	MIXED
Mixed – white and black African	
Mixed – white and black Caribbean	
Mixed – any other mixed background	
White – British	WHITE
White – Irish	
White – any other white background	
Any other	OTHER
Not known	NOT KNOWN

APPENDIX 10

PRIMARY RESEARCH RESPONDENT SAMPLE AND PROFILE

Table 3: STAFF INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THE PRIMARY RESEARCH

	All	BME	White	LEVELS		
				Tier 1 & 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
	96	92	4	9	65	22
% of total of FTE staff population	100%					

88 invited to the focus groups (all BME); 8 invited to be interviewed (4 BME & 4 White)

Table 4: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS: REGION, GENDER, SECTOR & LEVEL

5 Focus Groups - 57 Participants

Area/Region	No of participants	GENDER		SUB-SECTOR			LEVEL		
		F	M	FE	WBL	OTHER LEA/LS C	TIER 2	TIER 3	TIER 4
London	13	9	4	13	0	0	0	13	0
Midland	14	10	4	10	3	1	0	11	3
Nth West	11	7	4	9	0	2	1	10	0
London	10	5	5	10	0	0	0	1	9
London	9	7	2	8	0	1	0	8	1
TOTALS	57	38	19	48	3	4	1	43	13
% TOTAL	100.0	66.7	33.3	87.7	5.3	7.0	1.8	75.4	22.8

Table 5: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY REGION AND AGE

Area/Region	Age Range						TOTALS
	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59	60+	
London	1	2	7	2	0	0	13
Midland	2	5	6	1	0	0	14
Nth West	0	7	2	2	0	0	11
London	1	4	4	1	0	0	10
London	1	3	5	1	0	0	9
TOTALS	5	21	24	7	0	0	57
% of TOTAL	8.8	36.8	42.1	12.3	0.0	0.0	100.0